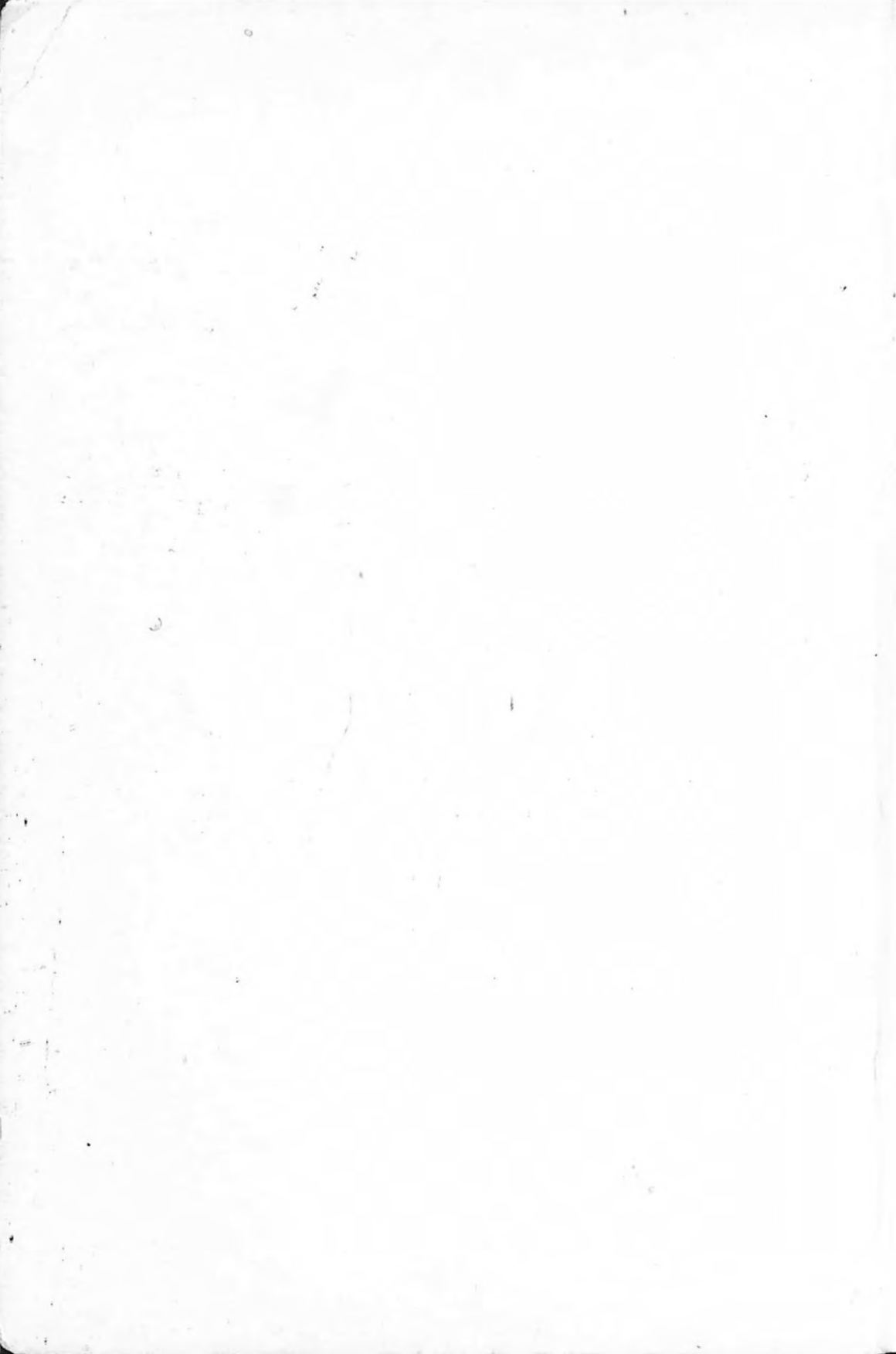


My BIG RED

obsession

by CHARLIE WINKLER

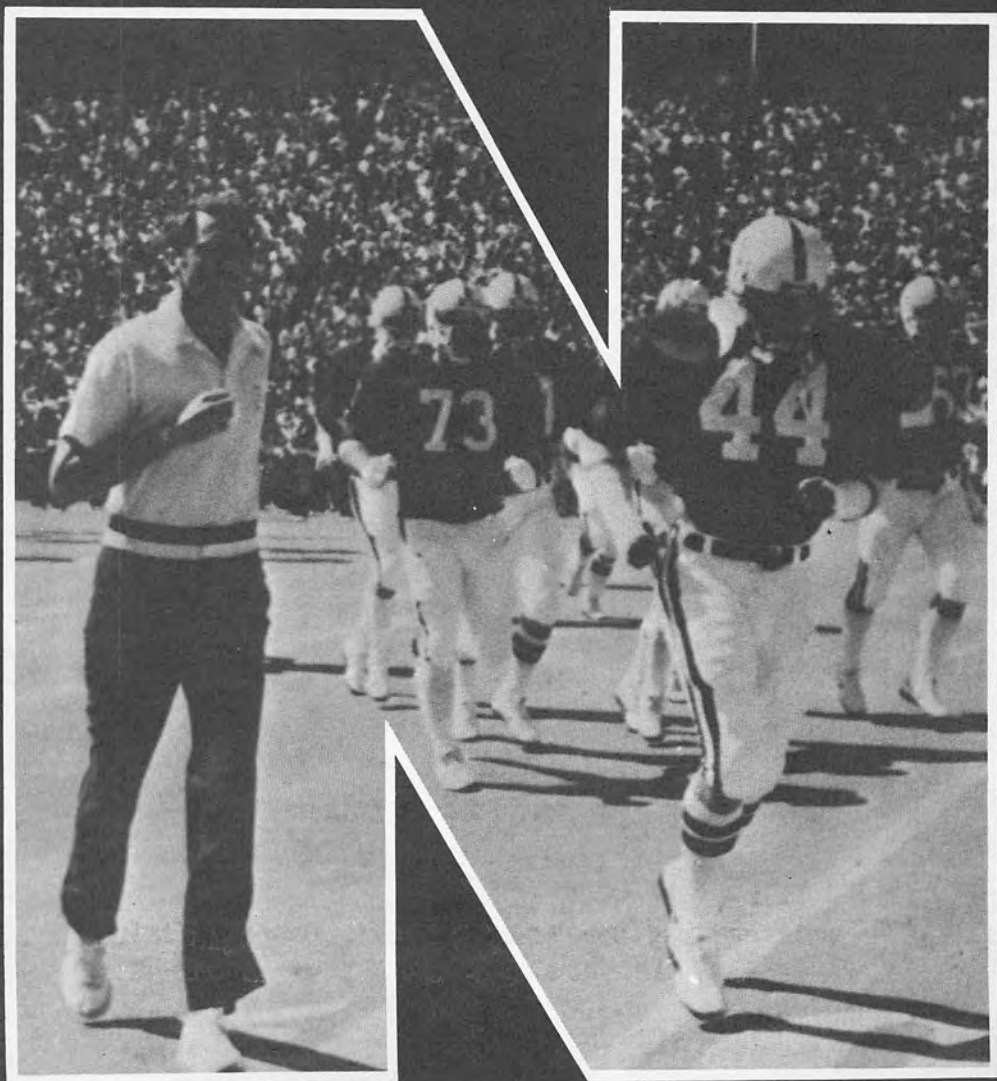




My BIG RED

obsession

by CHARLIE WINKLER



Dedication

Dedicated to one of our famous Nebraskans, Johnny Carson, for what he has done for humor and to put our state on the map.

Also to every Cornhusker player who ever put on a Nebraska uniform — especially those who came back from adversity including Tom Novak, Budge Porter, Randee Johnson and Mike Bokaty.

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Winkler Publishing Co.
Grand Island, Nebraska

Library of Congress Catalog Card
81-69947

Printed by Service Press
Henderson, Nebraska

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What the Scribes Say About Charlie Winkler

"If you could only have one book in your library on Nebraska Football this is the one you should have."

Norris Anderson — *Football News*

Grand Island's Charlie Winkler, Nebraska's No. 1 fan, spoke at a banquet in Omaha this week. Asked how he slept after the Huskers were beaten by Oklahoma, Winkler replied: "Like a baby — I'd sleep an hour, then wake up and cry an hour, then sleep an hour . . . then wake up and cry an hour."

Randy York — *Lincoln Journal-Star*

He planned their honeymoon around a stop in Sturgis, S.D., in order to try and recruit a prep player for the Cornhuskers. "The honeymoon was ruined," Winkler said. "The kid went to Colorado."

Mike Fleming — *Memphis, Tenn. Commercial Appeal*

"In fact, Winkler thinks the road to heaven is paved with AstroTurf and is sure life's end zone has a big N.U. painted on it."

Doug S. Looney — *Sports Illustrated*

"Wherever you see an N sweater or a red feather in Nebraska, you'll probably find somebody who knows "Wink". He's part of the Cornhusker scene."

Wally Provost — *Omaha World-Herald*

"Now old Charlie Winkler, he's some kind of football fan. Of course he had his son reschedule his wedding cause it was set for a Saturday and Nebraska had a scrimmage that day."

Bob Chick — St. Petersburg, Fla., *Independent*

"Football has done more to put this state on the map than anything in the world. They know where we are at. After we beat Alabama in the Orange Bowl, it took me three days to get through their state. My battery kept going dry. I kept honking my horn all the way through Alabama."

John Taylor — *Omaha World-Herald*

Acknowledgements

There are hundreds of persons who helped make this book possible. But I would be remiss not to mention a few among the many.

Thanks to the dozens and dozens of fans, friends, players and coaches who provided me with stories, interviews and shared my love for Nebraska football with some thrilling first hand stories.

A personel thanks to my good friend Harry DeMaranville of Grand Island, who has provided me with dozens of scrapbooks down through the years. To the many other fans who gave or loaned me scrapbooks and clippings to refresh my momory in addition to the unlimited material I had gleaned through the years.

Other information for this book was provided from the files of the *Omaha World-Herald*, the *Lincoln Journal and Star*, the *Grand Island Independent* and the *Nebraska Historical Society*.

There have been some great books on Nebraska football but those who provided some background for this effort include *Go Big Red* by Hollis J. Limprecht, James Denney and Howard S. Silber, *The Cornhuskers* by David Israel, *The Big Red Machine* by David Okerlund and numerous editions of the Nebraska Football press guides by Don Bryant and his staff at the University of Nebraska.

Pictures for this book were provided by *Grand Island Independent* photographer Rich Fox, who photograped the color picture on the cover, to artist Doug Knutson of the *Omaha World-Herald*, who provided the illustration which is on the back cover, to Hub Ogden of the *Omaha World-Herald* for permission to use old file photos and pictures from some of my old scrapbooks in the book. Also to Bailey Studio, Maggiroe Photography and Bartelt Studios for some of the various pictures, with some of them not used because of lack of space. Also to the *Nebraska Historical Society* for some wonderful pictures. Last and certainly not least to my good friend, Burton

Newton, for many photographs and some first hand history of Nebraska Football.

A special thanks to editor Bill Brennan of the *Grand Island Independent* and good friend Norris Anderson of *Football News* for their counsel and special contributions. To the entire Nebraska sports information department of Don Bryant and his great staff including Jan Sojka, the most personable and loveliest secretary in any sports information office in America. Also Chuck Pool, Tom Simons and Vicki Cartright for all their beautiful cooperation.



Jan Sojka

To the Service Press of Henderson, Nebr., printers of this book, for their wonderful cooperation as they are 100% professionals of the highest standards.

Also to all my many friends including my family who gave me their support when I became tired and just wanted to give it a "quick kick" and forget the whole deal. You have truly been beautiful.

Charles Winkler

Foreword

There are many good reasons to write a book, but I wrote this one for fun.

The real reason for writing this book is because of an intelligent remark I heard recently. An onion can make people cry, but there never has been a vegetable grown that can make people laugh. That laughter, in the form of a vegetable, or this book, is the nourishment we need to live. To live successfully is to be able to laugh at ourselves and to enjoy what we do.

Some of the stories in this book are legend and others stretch the truth only a bit. The ones that matter are the truth. All the facts in this book are true, but this collection of Nebraska football memorabilia was never written to be a history. It was written to take Big Red fans back into the locker room to meet the coaches and players, past and present, as people and not just numbers on a program.

Sometimes I'm afraid fans forget about the past Cornhusker tradition and worry that younger Nebraskans learn little about it. But rich football tradition will have flourished in this state for a century in the year 1990. I'm baffled myself that at the turn of the century, 3,000 Nebraska fans journeyed to Minnesota for a road game. This was before the automobile was widely used, let alone highways. The only long-distance transportation of the time was the train. Only some extra research has convinced me that such an early migration of Big Red fans ever happened.

Just as amazing, every member of the only football team from Nebraska to ever play in a Rose Bowl were from high schools across the state. There were no scholarships.

But the pride which brings so many Big Red fans to Memorial Stadium today was just as noticeable many years ago and these and other stories about early-day Cornhuskers will provide older readers with memories and younger ones with heroes so old, they're new.

Many of my good friends and family members told me to write this book the same way I give my speeches. I've tried to be very faithful to that approach. I've poked some fun at my friends and myself at the risk of earning an introduction that

Neal Holub, Kearney's most famous meat mogul, pinned on me one night by saying, "When Wink came to Grand Island to go into the real estate business from his Ravenna farm, he was so countrified, he made Junior Sample look like David Niven!" I raised quite a bit of corn on that Ravenna farm and I don't intend to quit now.

Before going on with the fun, it wouldn't be right not to stop and thank so many friends, and especially my wife, Doris, for making this book possible. I pray that it doesn't incur the same fate as a book that my good friend, Cavett Robert, the top speaker in the nation, tells about. Rave notices about that book were found by a man rummaging through a magazine. According to a notice in the periodical, the only masterpiece and literary gem ever written was now available. Since the man reading the magazine was such a faithful reader, he immediately ordered the book and paid for it in advance. He greeted the mailman every day for a week before the book finally arrived. When it did, the man immediately sat down and read the book, cover-to-cover only to find out it was the worst thing he had ever read. So, in the world's shortest book review, the man angrily sat down and once more wrote the company, this time noting, "Where you guys made your mistake is that you should have let the guy who wrote the ad, write the book."

I hope this book is up to the expectations of my many friends across the state. I know good books are like good friends, so above all else, I want their book to be a friend that sounds like Charlie Winkler.

Every section of the country has its own version of the nation's No. 1 football fan, but until a more dedicated one comes along, the title will have to sit on the throbbing brow of Charles Winkler, who lives — and is planning to die — with the University of Nebraska Cornhuskers.

Charlie is given to the usual extravaganza of genus extrovertus — the 200 miles-round trip between his home in Grand Island and Lincoln for scrimmages, years of perfect attendance at home and road games, the red wardrobe, visits alone to Memorial Stadium just to sit — the whole bit. Charlie has told everybody that if he has a seizure at a game, he wants them to take him down to the respirator and roll him over so he is facing the field.

"That way maybe I can see one more touchdown," he says. "Then I want a helicopter to drift slowly over the stadium, spreading my ashes. People can look up and say, 'Hey, cover your cokes and hotdogs. Here comes old Charlie floatin' down. Ain't he a prize?'" — *Sports Illustrated*, 1975.

That's the story that changed my life. It was first printed in an article by a writer named Doug Looney for the *National*

Observer. Looney was writing an article about college football mania and contacted ticket manager Jim Pittenger at the University of Nebraska. He asked Pitt who the craziest fan in the state might be. Fun-loving Pitt remembered that I once jokingly introduced him at a Nebraska Touchdown Club banquet as the kind of a guy who, if he worked in a suicide prevention center, would leave the phone off the hook. To get even, he gave Looney my phone number and told him to call me at around 3 a.m. When the likeable Doug called me, he asked me to say something crazy. At 3 a.m., I couldn't think of too many quips except to tell him that I just finished dreaming about speaking at a midgets' convention and got a standing ovation and didn't even know it. But Looney was looking for stories about crazy football fans so I repeated the story that Mike Wilson, the former Grand Island scribe, who is now in public relations in Atlanta, Ga., had told him: I wanted to live and die with the Big Red and this is the story he repeated in the article.



James Pittenger — Man of All Seasons

Later that fall, both Looney and the story made their way to *Sports Illustrated* magazine. A few months after the story of my Big Red fervor was printed in *Sports Illustrated*, Looney was assigned to do a feature article on me. He came out to Lincoln and Grand Island with a photographer and spent a weekend with me and other great Husker fans. It was slightly embarrassing to be singled out because there are so many great Big Red fans across the state. I remember telling Doug that I really wasn't that much out-of-the-ordinary. But Looney, one of the nicest chaps I ever met, kept asking me questions such as, "Is it true that you were trying to recruit football players on your honeymoon?" or "Do you really record every Nebraska football game on a cassette and play back the tape on Johnny Rodgers' touchdown run against Oklahoma just to cheer yourself up?" Anyhow, the weekend led to a feature about me that went something like this:

"Charlie, if your wife died and the funeral had to be on a Saturday when Nebraska was playing football, would you go to her funeral or take in the football game?"

"I'm a decent man," sniffs Charles Winkler of Grand Island, Nebraska, "and that's a stupid question. Certainly I would go to her funeral. Of course, I wouldn't have time to go out to the cemetery."

The magazine article had a profound impact on my life. I had always been a man of many words. As the adopted son of a Ravenna farm family, I grew up learning to talk to stubborn animals and farm equipment. And when I get on my favorite subject, Nebraska football, I just can't stop talking. I have kept records about the great Nebraska teams in the past, including all of the also rans. And I continued that practice when the Huskers became annual visitors to the holiday bowls. Even before the magazine article, I did a limited amount of speaking as a hobby. Many times I was called on to speak on a spur of the moment situation. So I decided I might as well be ready. I started preparing some of my favorite "knee-slappers." Now I have around 3,000 jokes all indexed on various subjects, for just about any kind of situation. As psychologists say, "We all have a little 'ham' in us," and I have always been able to make people laugh. In fact, I truly live by the fact that we all have a tendency to take ourselves too seriously. I always tell youth groups to take their job seriously and themselves lightly.

Naturally, the magazine article gave me national exposure.

Requests for me as a speaker increased and started coming in from varying parts of the state and outstate, for that matter. In fact, one of my most memorable speaking moments came at a banquet I didn't even attend.

Back in 1975, members of the Alabama Monday morning Quarterback Club arranged for a couple of guests to phone into their weekly meeting. I was one of them. To my surprise, the other was President Gerald Ford. Since that time, I've been very fortunate to have appeared on programs with distinguished company when speaking such as Paul Harvey; Buster Crabbe; Dr. Norman Vincent Peale; opera singer and cancer victim Marguerite Piazza; Jim Tunney, head of the NFL officials; my dearest friend, Ethel Burge, retired lecturer and the funniest lady I know; the dean of all speakers, the immortal Cavett Robert, the Phoenix multimillionaire, and many others. Meeting and working with people of this caliber is one of the fringe benefits that comes with being a speaker, as they go out of their way to help you in any manner they can. But even a greater reward is meeting so many less known but equally wonderful people in different parts of the country, people that make our nation so great.

One of the most "fun" things that happened to me occurred the night I was master of ceremonies at one of our large Touchdown Club meetings in Lincoln.

I didn't know until about 20 minutes before the meeting started that I was to be the MC. However, since I have been doing this professionally, I always try to be halfway prepared.

Just a couple minutes before we sat down to eat, one of the little waitresses at the Hilton Hotel came up to me and handed me an unsealed envelope with no name on it.

When I opened it, the note read: "Dedicated to Coach Tom Osborne and Charlie Winkler, the only two teetotlers I know":

For those who choose — A life of Booze
I have no sympathy at all.
My sympathy lies with you Sober Guys . . .
As us drunks are having a ball!

Needless to say, when I read this poem to the group they literally fell off their chairs.

In the years since the magazine article, I have made the difficult choice of giving up my full-time career as a realtor and devoting more time to my speaking. It was a very tough

decision to make, but I sold my half interest in our real estate and insurance office, Winkler Realty Co., to my son, Chuck. Now I work a limited amount of time on farm and ranch sales and commercial property. I was torn between speaking and the enjoyment of selling. I always joke that even though I've been in the selling business most of my life, in some form or other, and I will continue to be in sales until the day I die, the fact remains that the first hour of my death, I expect to have the toughest selling job in history.

My other choice was speaking to people, particularly young people, about football, humor and most importantly, how to live a fulfilling life. There are many similarities between life and football. A couple years ago I addressed the subject in an article I wrote for a book published by my good friends Cavett Robert and Merlyn Cundiff. It was called *We're In The People Business*.

IS THERE LIFE AFTER FOOTBALL

In my chapter, "Is There Life After Football?" I talked about why life, football and humor are so closely related. Football fields are mirrors of life because they record success and failure and all the progress in between, I noted. But a poem entitled "Goals" which I carry with me always, illustrates very clearly how life should be lived on and off the field.

*Imagine playing football — On an unmarked field of green,
Not a goal line to be sought — Not a goal post to be seen.
It would be an aimless battle — Where there's nothing to
be gained,*

*Without a thing to strive for — Not a score to be obtained.
We must have purpose in our lives — For the flame that
warms the soul,*

Is an everlasting battle — Every man must have his goal.

Ever since I can remember, I have always had an intense love for Nebraska football. In fact, back in the good old days on the farm south of Ravenna, I chuckle yet from the comments of my brother, Carl. In the days before I had season tickets, he and I worked out an arrangement that when we were picking corn I would let him run the cornpicker during the Saturday afternoon game while I would scoop the corn off the wagons and listen to the progress of the game by radio. This was in the days before transistor radios and the only way to listen to the game was to have my automobile right by the wagon with the radio turned

up so high it could be heard in the next county. My brother remarked that he could observe from the cornpicker the way the game was going.

During Coach Glassford's regime, the Huskers had a lead at Missouri in an important conference game but a chap named Johnny Glorioso started running wild in the second half and was literally eating up huge chunks of yardage. Needless to say, I took out my pent-up emotions on that load of corn. My brother remarked later that unloading that load of corn must have been some sort of a record. Every time Tom Novak or Walt Spellman or other defensive stars of the Huskers would stop a Missouri back, I would stop to catch my breath. But when things went wrong for my beloved Huskers, that wagon of corn paid the price.

As early as 1935, I started saving every all-state football team of the prep stars from the Omaha World-Herald. One might say I already was scouting for the Cornhuskers even when I was a boy. I kept track of where each player went to college and of his progress. When they attended Nebraska, I charted how many quarters the Husker athletes played. Even today, one of the fascinating parts of college football to me is watching the growth of players from the Nebraska freshman team. I follow them as close, if not closer, than the varsity.

In fact, I received a few raised eyebrows from folks who found out that in 1968 I left a varsity game at the end of the third quarter to go watch the frosh play. The Huskers had a comfortable lead and I exited with a friend, Del Theasmeyer, and my secretary and her husband, Bob and Eileen Tesmer. We drove from Lincoln to Grand Island, where we dropped the Tesmers off at a cafe on the interstate, knowing they could get home from there, and drove to McCook where the freshman team played McCook Junior College that evening. We dashed madly into their stadium just at the opening kickoff. The Husker yearlings won 43-6, and on the way home Del asked me how I was going to explain my crazy impulse to drive to McCook to my wife. I told him in no uncertain terms that I was going to plead insanity, to which she would readily agree.

Quite naturally, any time there was a Husker wager to be settled in my hometown of Ravenna, I was the guy the townspeople looked to. But because of the effects of the depression and the dust bowl days and my wonderful parents' lack of interest in athletics, I never did see a Nebraska football

game until 1946. It was a home game against Missouri and I was so excited about this chance to see the Cornhuskers play that I think I milked my dairy cows at 4 that morning. I haven't been that excited since Marilyn Monroe left Joe DiMaggio.

During the game I also got my first introduction to that illegal pasttime that is commonly known as "Football Spirits." Yes, I met my first football drunk, seated directly behind my partner and me. He kept sipping a few "toddlies for the body" and each time either team would do something exciting he would cheer wildly. Finally, in absolute frustration, I turned to this happy-go-lucky drunk and asked him, "Just who are you rooting for anyhow?" He just grinned through blood-shot and bleary eyes and replied, "Heck, I don't even know who's playing."

Much to my disappointment, Missouri won the game 21-20 and I had my first visual heartbreak. In the late moments of the game, quarterback Sam Vacanti, who could throw the ball a ton, threw a bullet pass to Harvey "Thin Man" Stroud, who was streaking into the clear, but the throw was just off his finger tips. If this pass had been six inches shorter and hadn't eluded his grasp, this great sprinter, who burned up western Nebraska in his athletic days at North Platte High, would have been long gone on one of the most exciting finishes in Memorial Stadium history.

In 1949, I first started attending Nebraska home games on a regular basis and was amazed by the many Nebraska fans holding those season ducats for years. In those days, season tickets were much easier to come by and the good, loyal fans had no idea what a lifetime of thrills those tickets would provide.

One of the thrills of going to the Nebraska games in those days was visiting the Husker dressing room, as my good friend and a former Ravenna star athlete, Jack Pesek, would always introduce us to his teammates such as Carl Samuelson, Tom Novak, Jim Myers, the former York ace, and others. Even in defeat, these fellows were always champions to me. I can remember the great Charlie Toogood, one of our linemen who blocked an enemy punt with his face (they didn't wear nose-guards on their helmets in those days). His teammates kept kidding him because his handsome face looked like he had gone 15 rounds with Joe Louis. "Does it hurt?" To which he joked back, "Only when I laugh."

One day I took a friend of mine, Leonard Fisher, a muscular farm boy who stood all of 6 feet 6 inches and tipped the scales at around 285, to a game and down to the dressing room afterward. Coach Bill Glassford kept eyeing this huge hunk of man and then came over to me and asked, "Would that friend of yours be interested in a college football career?" The late Fisher always felt this invitation was one of the highlights of his life.

Until the Korean War, I shared a pair of season tickets with a friend, "Curly" Nolda, one of the finest athletes and young men I ever knew. We would take turns using the tickets and many times would go to the game together. When he left for the service, he allowed me to buy out his ticket. These were the days when you could easily purchase season tickets at about any vantage point you wanted. But these seats had a special attachment for me because in one of my great sorrows, Curly gave his life in the Korean conflict.

Often in those early days Mary Lee and Mick Pesek would ride to Lincoln with us to see their brother Jack play. Also Noel Macek, another great Ravenna athlete and now a financial tycoon in Omaha, was a guest. These were fun trips, although, being before the days of the interstate, treks down Highway 34 were long and grueling. We had a travel ritual that broke up the trip, however, stopping at Seward and picking up a bag of hamburgers at the Star Cafe. In all my travels, speaking all over the nation, I have yet to ever come close to those tasty burgers. During the late 1950's when I was first trying to interest my son, Chuck, in Nebraska football, I would bribe him into attending the games by promising him some hamburgers both going and coming home.

A WINK AT SPORTS

One of the thrills of my days of living in Ravenna was writing a sports column for the weekly Ravenna News called, "A Wink At Sports." This brought me a lifetime friendship with the Cass family, owners and editors of the paper. It was fun putting my own commentary on the Huskers into print and provided me relaxation after a long day.

I discovered in the early 1950's that even a sports writer for the Ravenna News could get caught in a little controversy. A portion of this book is devoted to the controversial coaching techniques of Bill Glassford. It was during this time I became

involved. During his stormy career, I got letters from all over the state and out of respect for any coach, I didn't print them as I feel any mentor has his way of running a program and I always felt that I had a working agreement with each of these gentlemen that he didn't tell me how to farm or run a real estate office and I wasn't going to try to run his team.

But a problem came up when the former Ravennan, Jimmy Cederdahl, an All-Star back who led Lincoln Northeast to a Class A championship in 1950, and Bobby Decker, the former Omaha Holy Name "All-Everything," wanted to go out for baseball in addition to their football. I suggested that something certainly could be worked out where they could at least play some baseball between spring drills.

Some Lincoln sports writer, who apparently was feuding with Coach Glassford, picked up my column and published it, causing the most excitement in the state since the fabulous Johnny Carson, on one of his Omaha radio shows, advertised a play gun for the kids that shot real bullets. (The humorous Carson advised the kids not to send in any money but to just shoot it out with the postman when the package arrived.)

It was apparent to me after this incident that I was wrong, and while I was writing my true feelings, I forgot that every coach has his way of doing things.

The problem with Cederdahl and Decker was unfortunate in another way as it cost the Huskers the services of Jimmy Decker, Bob's brother who went to UCLA to be a star and later played a great game in that wild Michigan State 17-14 win in the Rose Bowl. At that time Bob Devaney was a Spartan assistant coach.

Coach Glassford was always a diplomat and we remained friends. In fact, before the next season began he sent me a two-page letter telling me what the prospects looked like for the next year's team. I appreciated this very much, but at the risk of being immodest, I knew the information by heart. The well-timed letter did sort of soothe over any strained feelings, however. And I still maintain one man has to run any program, with the help of his staff of course, and I am behind any coach 100%. I feel every coach should have full authority and I marvel at some fans who perhaps shout at a coach to put some players back in the game when the player might not be doing his job, might have been missing his assignments or even might

have been hurt. However, this is part of the game, and I guess this is a privilege fans pay for when they buy their tickets.

THROWING ORANGES IN BAD TASTE

One thing that I wish could be changed at Nebraska more than anything else is the terribly disgusting habit of throwing oranges on the field when something exciting happens. I am amazed how some folks can't seem to understand that some Nebraska players, or the other team's for that matter, could step on one of these and either sprain an ankle or receive some other crippling injury that could cost him a whole season or even a football career. I am begging for this to stop, as I feel these actions focus back on the good sportsmanship of the Nebraska fans.

Even in the dismal years, when wins were scarce, I was always glad to help in the recruiting and meet some of the young men when they came into Lincoln for a game. One of my most vivid memories is the time that Chancellor Cliff Hardin introduced me to Lloyd Voss of Magnolia, Minn., who went on to be one of our all-time great linemen and have a fabulous professional career. I remember telling him, "Son, you look like a future All-American." Although he didn't make any of the first team All-American picks, he came close and he'll always be a champion to Big Red fans. He did go on to be one of the NFL's all time great defensive linemen.

During the Devaney and Osborne years, a letter writing crew was formed to write various prep stars, who the coaches were interested in having continue their education at the University of Nebraska, and of course play a little football if they found time. This has brought me a lot of thrills. Of course, the Huskers don't get all the boys they go after, but it is a chance for a closer insight on the wonderful, blue-chip talent the Nebraska coaches go after.

In these days of the frustrating NCAA rules, I am very careful about contacting a boy when I am speaking in his area as it could count as an official visit. Even after they sign the National Letter-of-Intent, I'm very careful something isn't taken wrong to give the University coaches a black mark, as Coach Osborne and staff are ultracareful and go strictly by the rules.

I have to admit, however, as I want this to be a candid book, that I was tempted one time to sort of "grab the bull by the horns" and help bring a boy back to Nebraska that I felt

belonged here. He was a split receiver from outstate, who almost signed with the Huskers the first time around. His father, however, had passed away and he felt he should be home with his mother instead of 1,200 miles away. After a disappointing freshman year at one of his home state institutions, he came to Lincoln and enrolled for a semester. In the informal workouts the fans and other players who saw him, including myself, felt he could be the closest thing to being another Johnny Rodgers we had ever seen. In many of our casual visits he remarked how much of a personality clash he had with his coach, who was nationally known for some of his wild sideline antics, and that he loved Nebraska and their coaches, who put the boy ahead of winning. Somewhere along the line, the boy got back home and among friends and old teammates; he got so much heat put on him that he decided to stay and re-enroll at their institution. He and I have become very good friends and I will feel to the day I die that I could have gone to his home and brought him back with me. I knew this would be breaking the rules and reflect on our coaches, so I gritted my teeth and stood back and used what I hoped was good judgment. It was pitiful to watch a young man waste such a brilliant career because, with Nebraska's passing offense, this glue-fingered receiver would have been an All-American. And I could have been serving 10 to 20 for kidnapping.

ON THE AIR

As the fame spread from the *Sports Illustrated* article, I received many calls from various radio stations all over the country. I can't begin to cover the beautiful friendships and wonderful things that happened to me. One warm memory goes back to my early business days in Grand Island. I had opened a real estate business across the street from the Big Boo Cafe and everyday I would drop by to see my good friend, George Boosalis, and other great Grand Island Husker fans in the cafe, where we made some difficult decisions regarding the next week's game. A familiar face was a bashful, but very knowledgeable young man, who was washing dishes and doing odd jobs. I used to always say hello to this silent chap and maybe ask his opinion on the coming contest.

Years later he went into the service and was stationed in

Turkey. He warmed my heart when he later returned stateside and came in my office to tell me that I unknowingly had helped him through a lonely period while he was overseas. "I was very homesick," the young man told me later. "But one particular week on the Overseas Network the coming Nebraska-Oklahoma showdown was the big game in the nation, and they were discussing it at length. As I was listening I heard your voice discussing the game with David Humm, our star quarterback. I believe I jumped three feet, when I heard your voice." With tears in his eyes, he related, "You'll never know how much a familiar voice meant to me."



Dave "The Dealer" Humm

My radio debut started back in the days when Ron Clark of Ravenna was playing for Nebraska and Station KGFV of Kearney asked me to come down and say a few words on a show they were having in regard to his senior year at Nebraska, 1950.

However, I had been interviewed by one of their announcers the spring before and it almost ended any radio work I was ever going to do. It has to be one of the funniest

events in my life. It was in the spring of 1950 and I had taken a load of hogs to market in Kearney and decided to take in some of the Big Ten track meet at the Kearney State College cinders. After unloading my porkers, I journeyed out to view any future Husker prospects that might be running in this always classy meet. I remember being dressed in a semi-western hat, the western type shirt and jeans that I always wore and a pair of combat boots. The KGFW announcer was firing questions about how I felt the upcoming Big Seven track meet was going to come out. I remember remarking that I felt it would go just the way Harry Meginnis, the Husker ace sprinter, broad jumper and of course a fine football player, would go.

While I spoke with deep conviction, some college boy hollered down at me out of the stands, "Hey, Tex, how are things out on the range?" The crowd around, well aware of my western attire, broke into laughter. The announcer and I were ready to roll on the ground with mirth, as it completely broke us up. Fortunately, the announcer was a pro and able to end the ill-fated radio interview rather abruptly. This was one of my first experiences in being able to laugh at myself. For the sake of the record, Harry Meginnis won the 100 and 220 as the Huskers prevailed as Big Seven champs with more than a 20-point bulge over second place Colorado. In fact, from his great feats on the cinders and the football field "Handsome Harry" will always be one of my favorite Husker athletes.

Today I have my own talk show on Station KMMJ in Grand Island. Long distance calls come in from all over the state and northern Kansas and we have live audience participation. Until recently, the program was the only one of its kind between Denver and Des Moines. This year I understand one other has started in western Iowa.

Being a Big Red fan does have some disadvantages, however, since many times I'm called in the night to settle a bet. A recent call went like this:

"Say, Charlie, I've got \$50 bet with a guy who says Dennis Claridge was never red-shirted. Who's right?"

I sadly told the poor chap to go back to the guy and try to settle out of court. But these bets have to be resolved, and sometimes I feel bad when a friend of mine loses. Settling differences, though, offers a little fun with sort of a different twist. The only bettors that annoy me are the fans that bet on the point spread and then get down on the coach.

I have had other experiences as a Husker fan that haven't been as happy. Before the Devaney and Osborne years, one of the finest football players to come out of Grand Island had a personality conflict with one of the assistant coaches, who had just come out of the pro ranks and had some extreme ideas on how to deal with a college gridder. After making the All Big-Eight team his junior year, this young man decided to pass up college football. This, of course, was in the days when a player could sign with the pros before his class graduated. After several attempts by his friends and father to persuade him to return to the Cornhuskers for his senior year, he decided to sign a professional contract. I remember his dad calling me to meet him downtown near the post office. Before he dropped the signed contracts in the mail, his dad and I had a long visit. It was one of the most difficult things I've ever had to do: to say I felt the boy was doing the right thing because my loyalty to the Huskers was so strong. But this assistant coach, who returned to play pro football when he found out he was more adept at playing than coaching, was the deciding factor. It was the only time I ever took sides in a dispute between a coach and an athlete, but this was once where I felt the player was right, since the coach was using some tactics on this lad that would make the late Vince Lombardi a little embarrassed. I must confess, however, that when the boy's dad dropped the contracts in the mail, both of us had tears in our eyes.

My support for local sporting events had me caught between a rock and a hard place one evening when a Husker recruit, Rick Berns, accidentally hopped on the wrong plane and was stranded at the Grand Island airport. Former Nebraska assistant coach Jerry Moore, who was one of my favorite coaches, called my house to see if I could go out and talk to Rick during his layover at the airport. However, I was out at Fonner Park, watching the Golden Gloves which was always promoted by my good friend, Ralph Mead. Our real estate office always gave a trophy to one of the boxing teams and I was there to present it. I always kid the handsome Mead that he almost cost us one of the finest backs to ever play for the Big Red. Mead, proprietor of a fine steak house and bar in Newman Grove, is a chap that, had he settled in Las Vegas a few years ago, would have owned a chain of casinos.

Of course, my wife couldn't get the message to me because there are no phones at Fonner Park. When I heard this news,

being fearful that we might have lost the services of this great football player, I told my wife that she should have sent a messenger, carrier pigeon, rockets or even a cab after me, as this was a matter of life or death. Little did I know that the death was going to be my own since this was one of the more serious disagreements that my wife and I ever had. Later we joked about this little family tiff, and every time I think how close we came to signing the divorce papers, I remember that we both laid out the groundwork in case we ever got a divorce. — My wife gets the house, the kids and the dog and I get the cassettes of the Nebraska football games.

Fortunately, Berns didn't let a layover in Grand Island deter him from a career with the Huskers. The coaches kidded me for years about the fact that, if I had been able to get to the airport that night, I probably would have talked him into giving up a college football career and going into the real estate business.

Usually, spreading the Big Red gospel has filled me with nothing but cherished memories. As I travel around the country, meeting folks, I'll be caught off guard when someone will come up to me and say, "Charlie, I've become a Nebraska fan, just because of you." I usually take a minute to recover from the moving compliment before saying, "Gee, that's wonderful. Do you have any sons? If so, how big are they and how fast can they run the 40-yard dash?"

When Oklahoma invaded Memorial Stadium last fall and broke everyone's heart in a stunning 21-17 win, friends from across the country feared for my health. "We thought of you," they told me. "We just knew Charlie was dead. We were watching the sky for your ashes." In the great northwest a couple of fans told me their cars were covered with ashes a few days after the Oklahoma loss. "We weren't sure it was you or just another blast from the Mt. St. Helen's Volcano," they explained.

The truth is I died a thousand times that day, just like I do any day that Nebraska loses a football game. But like most Nebraska fans, I'm pretty resilient. There have been too many thrills and exciting moments by the Cornhuskers for me to worry about the ones that got away. In the chapters of this book that follow, I'm going to share what I know and have experienced about the Big Red and why, as a fan, I believe there's no place like Nebraska.

Chapter 1

Bleeding Big Red

Whenever Johnny Rodgers touched the football, everyone was at a loss for words, including Nebraska radio announcers. The Huskers' only Heisman trophy winner led the Big Red to its most glorious years but he wasn't the first ball carrier to cause sportscaster Lyell Bremser to resort to his now famous expression, "Man, woman and child!"

One of the first times Bremser, Mr. Nebraska Football and the golden voice of KFAB radio in Omaha, used the expression was in 1940, the year Nebraska went to its first New Year's Day appearance, the Rose Bowl. It was the sixth game of the season and the running back, who had Bremser so excited, was Butch Luther, running his famous reverse while Nebraska battled from a two-touchdown deficit at the half to beat the Cyclones 21-12.

I remember this game as much as any game in Nebraska's colorful history. It was a game I never saw and there are very few Husker games, including practice scrimmages, that I have missed since. I wasn't even supposed to be listening to the broadcast of the game. But that was the game when I learned just how much I had become attached to the Cornhuskers, who so easily grab at the heartstrings of all Nebraskans.

On that particular Saturday afternoon in 1940, I was working for a construction firm in Kearney, Neb., and in those days we didn't have such things as transistor radios. The only radio in the whole area was hundreds of yards away in the company's office and well out of earshot. But reports on the game were more popular that cold, blustery afternoon than a hot cup of coffee. When word was given that the Huskers were trailing 12-0 at the half, the whole work force was buzzing like a lumber camp watching a burlesque show arrive. The report was followed by one that Nebraska had the ball and was on the move and the murmurs by the workers grew louder.

I, for one, couldn't stand it. I had to know what was happening. I remember deliberately cutting my finger on a piece of glass just so I could make a trip to the office for the first-aid kit, strategically located near the radio. It took all the courage I could muster to make the wound but little acting to feign a

painful grimace. Here's where I found out I was allergic to bleeding, especially my own. Sweat beads quickly collected on my forehead, my skin turned white and I developed a convincing tremble. By the time I reached the office, some young, sweet nurse was putty in my hands.

The sweet thing quickly applied a gauze bandage to my hand and assured me I would be okay and could return to work. But by now the pain was secondary and I was trying desperately to hear as much as I could about the outcome of the game. Only moments later, Luther was zig-zagging the field with his electrifying run and Bremser was exclaiming, "Man, woman and child!" To stall for more time, I had convinced the nurse that I was low on blood and might collapse if I returned to work. Bless her heart, she knew as much about Nebraska football as she did my wound. I think she thought a tight-end was where a Scotsman put his wallet, or one that was drunk; in fact, she couldn't put dressing on a salad. But, Nebraska won the game and I kept my job and learned that no matter what else I did with my life, I had to stay as close as I could to the Big Red.

My lifetime love affair with the Nebraska Cornhuskers started the way it does with most Nebraska boys. I was growing up on a farm near Ravenna, Neb., during the "Dirty Thirties", those dismal dust bowl days that made up the Great Depression in the Midwest. Mere survival was foremost on everyone's mind. It was something that drained proud, rugged men and a humiliation their children couldn't understand. It was as if the world had turned gray. But along with a Christmas dinner and a summer's swim, the Nebraska football team was one of those few rainbows in a time of no colors.

Money was so hard to come by, that one Christmas Eve, my father stepped outside, fired his shotgun in the air around midnight and told us Santa Claus had committed suicide. I think my only pet in those days was a tumbleweed. Those were the days that were so tough, hotel proprietors were stealing towels from the guests. As a boy, I thought "Day Old Bread" was a brand name.

But there was always football. It was something my wonderful parents, not sports fans, could never understand. They only knew that anyone willing to drive 135 miles, from our farm south of Ravenna to Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, most likely would want to play the game without a football

helmet. For me, seeing a Nebraska game simply was an impossibility.

In those days, my friends and I only saw the Cornhuskers in our dreams. But we knew each player from listening to the radio and reading the newspaper clippings. We pictured them all 10 feet tall.

At the time I was becoming a young Nebraska football fan, my Buffalo County Community was fed to a fevered pitch by the football heroics of our hometown football star, Hubert Boswell, a starting running back and later an All-Big Six selection. Those were the years when Nebraska football players not only went both ways on the offense and defense, but also participated in several sports. In the winter, Hub was a star on the hardwood under the late W.H. Browne, even though in those days Nebraska wasn't exactly a basketball hotbed. Yet to be a Big Red basketball star was no small feat.

Boswell Plays Last Year for Cornhuskers



Hubert Boswell — Hometown Hero

During this same period, Ravenna had another athletic hero, the famous world champion wrestler, John "Tigerman" Pesek. In those days, wrestling was more popular than it is now and easily lured more of a following from our tiny farm community than Hub Boswell did with his football prowess. "Tigerman" was a national legend, beating such famous wrestlers of the day as Jim Londos, Joe Stecher and Strangler Lewis. His trademark was an awesome toe-hold and talk of his accomplishments pervaded our community as much as Nebraska football.

But my hero was Boswell and through him, I cultivated my love for college football. I joined my friends glued to the radio each Saturday afternoon and we listened with complete devotion as Hub teamed with George Sauer and Bernie Masterson and the Huskers of long ago to conquer opponent after opponent. The seeds of a deepseated loyalty were well planted. The popular song of the day was "You've Got to be a Football Hero to Get Along with the Beautiful Girls." It went without saying that everyone in Ravenna associated this pulse-pounding lyric with our hometown legend. A few years later, when Ronald Reagan played the role of the immortal George Gipp of Notre Dame in the film, "Knut Rockne," we were all convinced that the only actor who could do any justice to Boswell was Clark Gable. But, we knew he was too old for the part and even Hollywood wouldn't be able to get a helmet over Clark's ears. Hub Boswell had to settle for home movies.

My interest in Nebraska athletics was fanned by my good friend and American Legion baseball manager, Roy Greenslit. The late Roy Greenslit was fondly known by his friends as "The Ravenna Lumber Tycoon." In his spare time he taught baseball to youths such as myself, and he did it well. Chip Bowley, state commissioner of Legion baseball when the sport was in its golden years, called Greenie the best.

Though baseball was Greenie's game, he didn't neglect other sports popular at the time. When each autumn rolled around, Greenie's love for baseball diverted to football. He saw to it that I received the latest vital statistics on Nebraska football players and always supplied me with one game program, containing a roster of the players, for each season. Each program included pictures of the players and I was able to match faces with my heroes, whose accomplishments were blared across the radio each Saturday afternoon. I memorized

players' weights, heights and the other usual information and I kept my own tally sheet on each Husker. My hometown acquaintances would tease me, saying I kept better track of the Husker football team than John Bentley, the highly-revered sports information director at the time.

I can't resist pausing to share my favorite story about my close friend, Roy Greenslit, who did so much to help shape my life with positive thinking, and always kept a sense of humor.

This story, incidentally, is a favorite with Floyd Stickney. "Stick" is the former superstar of Legion and Semi-pro baseball in Nebraska, and a young man to whom the immortal Branch Rickey once remarked: "Son, you have the best darned arm in the Cardinal organization". At the time he played in Triple A baseball, only a step from the majors. Floyd, now a Kearney steel building magnate, falls off his chair when he hears this story retold as he saw it happen.

Greenie was managing the Ravenna Legion nine in a do-or-die struggle with another crackerjack eastern Nebraska Legion team, Staplehurst. The crafty little manager was known for his on-the-field antics to confuse the opponents and umpires alike. But during this game, a Staplehurst player pulled the hidden ball trick on one of Greenie's runners as the boy unconsciously led off first base. Not to be outdone, the cagy Greenslit kicked up a storm and insisted that time had been called. He talked just fast enough to have the umpires completely perplexed. But the Seward County Sheriff and father of a Husker great from Staplehurst, Elmer Dohrmann (who incidentally had the all-time record of letters won as a Husker — 11), strolled out to the mound where Greenie would have made Billy Martin proud with his heroics. Now Sheriff Dohrmann, like his famous son, was a hulk of a man in his own right, and he towered over the debonair, 5-foot 4-inch Ravenna manager and it was with considerable authority that he tapped the diminutive Greenie on the shoulder and ordered him to go sit down. Greenslit, not breaking the momentum of the conversation, took a couple of respectful steps back from Dohrmann, pointed with his arms to both benches and looked up without changing his expression, asking, "Where do you want me to sit — here or over there?" Greenie's sudden display of cooperation and ability to give a safe signal at the same time broke up the tense argument and left both teams and opposing baseball fans in stitches.

I always maintain that Greenie was the greatest salesman in the world. He is the only guy I know that could sell American made transistor radios in Japan. In fact, some maintain that when he was working his way through college he was working in a clothing store in Lincoln and a grieving widow came in to buy a suit in which to bury her deceased husband and Roy, being such a great salesman, sold her a suit with two pair of trousers.

Such were the days of the "Dirty Thirties" when the bonds between Nebraskans and their football team ran as deep as they do today. But Nebraska's rich football tradition started long before I came on the scene. The early years were marked by heroes as real as the ones today and in my boyhood youth, but have faded into history like the pages of an old book.



Boswell with "6 on the board".

Chapter 2

The Early Years

Nebraska had been a state for only two decades, the Wild West was barely tamed and an Indian chief named Geronimo was still being pursued in the Arizona desert by U.S. Cavalry pony soldiers when the first football game was played by a University of Nebraska football team. The squad of but a dozen players made a trip from Lincoln to play a YMCA team on Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1890, ending a seven-year push for football by college students.

In the fall of 1889, a group of civil engineering students laid out the first football field on a northwest section of the campus. Even then, space was at a premium on the Lincoln city campus and the first field was less than $\frac{3}{4}$ the size of a regulation field. A man named A.J. McClatchie journeyed to Nebraska from Olivet College in Michigan where he had learned how to play and coach football. Once on the campus, he taught the game to Nebraskans, and as a student, coached and captained the first Husker football game. South Dakota challenged Nebraska to a game in 1889 but the game was never played because of an early winter.

The next year, when Nebraska's enrollment was no larger than 500, the faculty agreed to allow a football team to play other schools. The first challenge was by the Omaha YMCA in November. Nebraska won the game 10-0 as a ball carrier named A.N. Troyer scored the school's first touchdown, then worth four points.

By 1890, McClatchie had faded from the scene and the team was under the direction of Dr. Langdon Frothingham. He was a man with three distinctions. He came to Nebraska from Harvard, he was the only coach until Tom Osborne to have a "Dr." in front of his name and he was Nebraska's only undefeated coach. On Feb. 13, 1891, Frothingham took his team, known as the Old Gold Knights, to Crete where it soundly defeated Doane College 18-0. Frothingham, also a player coach, watched from the sidelines on crutches; he had broken an ankle during the scrimmage. Later that year, Frothingham returned to Massachusetts to attend Boston Medical School.

T.U. LYMAN (2-2-0)

Until 1901, Nebraska changed coaches almost yearly as its fledgling football program found its wings. Frothingham's successor, T.U. Lyman, stepped in when W.P. Bowman, a physical education instructor assigned to coach the team, turned out to know nothing about football. Bowman lasted long enough for Nebraska to split a pair of games with Doane while Lyman, the Iowa coach, volunteered to prepare Nebraska to play his own team. Iowa won the game 22-0. With no coach, Nebraska went back and beat Doane one more time as the school's first notable black athlete, George Flippin, scored three touchdowns. Though Lyman coached only one game of Nebraska's 2-2 season, he is listed in Nebraska press guides as the official coach for that year.

J.S. WILLIAMS (2-2-1)

J.S. Williams, an Omaha attorney, was the Nebraska coach in 1892, the season Nebraska joined its first league. On December 28, 1891, the universities of Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and Missouri met to form the Interstate League. But in the first season of play, Missouri refused to play Nebraska unless Flippin was benched. Feelings in Missouri ran strong from the Civil War and the Tigers forfeited the game rather than take the playing field against a black man. The victory helped Nebraska, now known as the "Bug Eaters," to a 2-2-1 season. Other popular names for the Huskers that year were the "Antelopes" and the "Rattlesnake Boys".

FRANK CRAWFORD (9-5-1)

Frank Crawford, a Yale graduate, was the first man to coach Nebraska for more than one season, leading the school to records of 3-2-1 in 1893 and 6-2 in 1894. Crawford was the first salaried coach and 1893 was the first year Nebraska charged admission to its games, 25 cents. Crawford's salary caused financial problems for the Nebraska athletic association so he took some of the pay in tuition and in 1894 agreed to teach for free. That was the year Nebraska won its first league championship.

CHARLES THOMAS (6-3)

In 1895, Charles Thomas, originally from Doane and then the Nebraska line coach, took over the helm and led his team to a 6-3 season and another Interstate League title.

E.N. ROBINSON (11-4-1)

Thomas was followed by E.N. Robinson who led the Bug Eaters to a 6-3-1 season in 1896, though Nebraska failed to win the league title. But Robinson, another easterner from Brown College, returned Nebraska to the top of the league in 1897 as his squad finished 5-1.

FIELDING YOST (7-4)

Fielding Yost, later a famous coach at Michigan, coached Nebraska to a 7-4 record in 1898, the year the Interstate League was forced to play without Iowa. That school withdrew from the league between seasons that eventually led to the end of the conference.

A. EDWIN BRANCH (2-7-1)

A. Edwin Branch of Williams College in Massachusetts was the first Nebraska coach to have a losing season, 2-7-1, in 1899. And losing was something Nebraskans already had learned to disdain. It was his dismissal that led to the first Nebraska coach to ever develop tenure at the school.

BUMMY BOOTH (52-8-1)

Again Nebraska went east to find a coach and located Walter Clarence Booth at Princeton. He came with the nickname "Bummy" but it was used flatteringly. In 1900, his first season, Nebraska went eight games without being scored upon. One of the games was a scoreless tie with a team known as the Kansas City Medics and the season ended with a 20-12 loss to Minnesota, a game played in front of William Jennings Bryan. But Bummy had given Nebraskans a 7-1-1 season and nobody ever shortened his nickname. In fact, some claimed with a nickname like that he had to be tough.

The growth of the game at Nebraska wasn't hurt when a telegraph editor for the "Lincoln Star" renamed the team the "Cornhuskers." Cy Sherman, who wrote about Nebraska football adventures in his spare time at work, didn't feel "Bug Eaters" or "Rattlesnake Boys" were names with enough dignity. He also was tired of Nebraska being called by several nicknames. The name "Cornhuskers" was never questioned.

Under Booth, the state's interest in the game soared. In 1901, almost 3,000 fans went with NU to Minnesota only

to watch them lose 19-0. Undaunted, the same number went to the north country when Nebraska gained a 6-0 revenge. Remember, these were days without super highways and fast cars. The only cross-country method of travel was by train. Traveling that distance for a football game was a remarkable phenomenon. It was a preview of 400 and 500 mile weekend trips that football-crazed western Nebraskans make to Lincoln in these modern times of expensive gasoline, where they almost need a "Friendly Travel Agent" to plan their trip for them. Which reminds me of how I met my wife — she was looking for a vacation and I was the last resort.

In 1901, Bummy led Nebraska to a 7-2 season and in 1902 the Huskers were a perfect 10-0, the school's first legitimate unbeaten season. In 1903, Bummy did even better with an 11-0 season and ran up a 27-game winning streak. When Nebraska fell to 8-3 in 1904, some fans clamored for his resignation. Even then, many were behind their coach, "win or tie." But in 1905, Bummy brought Nebraska back to a 9-2 mark. That wasn't enough to satisfy some fans and W.C. Booth decided he had enough. He returned to New York to practice law after a career record of 52 wins, eight losses and one tie, the second best by a Nebraska coach. Some of the wins were against small colleges and included Lincoln and Grand Island High Schools. But the opponents weren't all softies. Michigan, Minnesota, Colorado and others were on the schedule.

AMOS FOSTER (6-4)

Amos Foster of Dartmouth squeezed in a 6-4 record in 1906. One of the losses was to Chicago and the great All-American, Walter Eckersall, who booted five field goals in a 38-5 decision. Foster also left Nebraska to practice law in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he coached his final game with the Huskers, a 41-0 win.

W.C. KING COLE (25-8-3)

In 1907, Nebraska hired W.C. "King" Cole as coach and joined a new conference, the Missouri Valley. Cole improved Nebraska's record to 8-2 in 1907 and shared the league title. In 1908, Nebraska finished 7-2-1, one of the losses to the legendary Carlisle Indians and Jim Thorpe, coached by the immortal Pop Warner. The game was played in Lincoln where

the Cornhuskers were playing on their new Nebraska Field, but Carlisle won easily, 37-6.

Though Nebraska won the new league outright in 1908, the Cornhuskers fell 3-3-2 under Cole in 1909. But in his final season as coach, Cole brought his troops back to 7-1-0 in 1910. The only loss that season was to perennial powerhouse Minnesota, a team that Nebraska had defeated only once in its early history and had lost six times in eight meetings. Just like Oklahoma in the 1970's, Minnesota was the Cornhusker nemesis. But still, fans defied the confines of transportation of the day in hopes of a Big Red win. The best Nebraska could do under Cole was a 0-0 tie in 1908. That final year, Minnesota blanked Nebraska 27-0 and Cole resigned in frustration despite a 119-0 win over Haskell for an all-time school scoring record.



When "Wink" needed some Big Red inspiration, he didn't need to go clear to Nebraska's Memorial Stadium, only to Grand Island's Meves Bowl.



Another "Husker Flashback" as Charlie visits Meves Bowl to get the Husker inspiration he needs. One can almost relive the great Husker victory in 1978 over Oklahoma.

Chapter 3

The Stiehm Rollers

The guy that succeeded Cole almost erased that 119-0 scoring in the first game of 1910. In his debut as a Cornhusker coach, Ewald O. Stiehm led his troops to a 117-0 win over Kearney Normal. His second win was 59-0 over Kansas State. In his third game, Nebraska lost to Minnesota 21-3, and the Huskers finished the season with a more earthbound 5-1-2 record, but another Missouri Valley Conference title. At 6 feet, 4 inches, the popular Stiehm quickly went on to cast his giant shadow over the years of W.C. Cole. Yet in his four years, Cole compiled a mark on 25 wins, eight losses and three ties. In five seasons, Stiehm finished with a comparable 35 wins, two losses and three ties. Cole won or shared three league titles while Stiehm captured all five. But memories of the Cole years are brief while those days under the famed Nebraska Stiehm Rollers still come alive when oldtimers get together.

Stiehm just had the better press. The towering star center of the University of Wisconsin 1906-08 team even had his own nickname, "Jumbo". His last name was pronounced "Stiehm" as in "steam" and it wasn't long before a clever journalist dubbed his methodical winning teams, the "Stiehm Rollers." His teams were known by this nickname for their machine-like qualities in disposing of opponents, not for physical stature. Stiehm scored another point with sports writers and historians for his unorthodox approach to the game. While traditional coaches recruited athletes with size and strength to withstand the physical punishment of the day, Stiehm opted for players who were slight in stature but fleet afoot. He developed football artistry, including fake passes, fake runs, end runs and the first trap plays — all relying on precision timing. Stiehm worked his players long hours into a highly-disciplined unit. He allowed no margin for error.

Jumbo caught the fancy of all with his nickname and coaching philosophy and it wasn't long before his players were treated accordingly. There were earlier individual stars but the first Nebraska football hero of note was Guy Chamberlain of Blue Springs, Neb., near Beatrice. Stiehm became NU's first recruiter when he convinced Chamberlain to transfer across

town to Nebraska U. from Nebraska Wesleyan University. At six feet, one inch, Chamberlain weighed 190 pounds on teams that average 160. But he also could run 100 yards in 10 seconds while in full football gear. In 1912, when Nebraska finished 7-1 (the only loss, of course, to Minnesota), Vic Halligan, who was to become the first Cornhusker All-American, was on the team. A year later, Halligan combined with Clint Rose in the line and halfback Len Purdy to do something only one other Nebraska football team had accomplished in ten games, a 7-0 win over Minnesota. There were other stars on that team that went on to an 8-0 season but just as Stiehm overshadowed Cole, Chamberlain dwarfed the players around him.

Part of Chamberlain's lure to the press and fans was that he had been a tough sell for Stiehm. As a sophomore, Chamberlain turned down a chance to play at Nebraska. Players from Nebraska actually visited Chamberlain's family farm to convince him to change schools. But Chamberlain relented only after he led Nebraska Wesleyan to two straight state titles.

He was ineligible for the 1913 season, but Chamberlain stirred interest even when he practiced. According to the book, *Go Big Red* in one scrimmage, Chamberlain sidelined three varsity players with jarring tackles. One injury he caused was a broken ankle and that prompted Stiehm to gruffly ask Chamberlain, "What are you trying to do — kill us off?" Since Nebraska had been unbeaten the previous year, without Chamberlain in the lineup, expectations were high for 1914. Without even playing, Chamberlain, already nicknamed "The Champ," and the speedy Johnny Rutherford were expected to provide Nebraska with its most explosive backfield to date.

Nebraska started well enough, with a 14-7 win over Washburn, but then was stunned in a scoreless tie with South Dakota.

Reportedly, South Dakota practiced six weeks during the summer in central Wisconsin, just to prepare for the acclaimed Cornhuskers. Nebraska rebounded with a 31-0 win over Kansas State and then demolished Michigan 24-0 in its big win of the season. Chamberlain electrified the crowd with a 90-yard kickoff return, described by one admiring sports writer as "a jolt with a stiff-arm here, a twist of his flying feet there, a sidestep, and he dashed on."

While Nebraska rebounded to regain its awesome reputation that year, Chamberlain went on to carve one of his own.

In their book, *Go Big Red*, Hollis Limprecht, James Denney and Howard Silber were told, "If you can imagine a piano mover doing the 100 yards in 10 seconds, you might have some idea how this Chamberlain looked." Only the South Dakota tie had blotted the perfect season everyone had expected.

Fans lowered their expectations, if only slightly, for 1915. Sure, Chamberlain was back, but South Dakota had shown that even legendary teams are manned by mortals. More importantly, an emerging national football power, Notre Dame, had made its way onto the Nebraska football schedule. Nebraskans only bided their time early in the season, as the Cornhuskers breezed to easy wins over their first four opponents. Game four, played before 8,000 fans at Nebraska Field, was the contest that mattered. As expected, the Irish entered the game unbeaten and unscored upon. Jesse C. Harper was the Notre Dame coach in those days, but he had dispatched a young assistant named Knute Rockne to watch the Cornhuskers play Kansas State.

The immortal Rockne, who helped complete the first football pass ever thrown and who invented many of the George Gipp stories that are now legend, had an unimaginative but very important bit of advice for his team: Stop Chamberlain! It was while scouting the Kansas State game that Rockne made one of his few coaching errors. He thought he had spotted something about Chamberlain and reported that the "Blue Springs Bullet" always veered toward the sideline when he went wide; he never cut back inside. The Irish used that misinformation in its game plan, according to the book, *Go Big Red*.

Early in the game, the Notre Dame defense was able to bottle Chamberlain inside while their offense took a quick 6-0 lead. After taking possession at the 20 from a Notre Dame kickoff, Chamberlain was given the football on a run wide. The Irish defensive pursuit played for Chamberlain to run wide. But "The Champ" baffled Rockne and the Irish defense with a sudden cut back inside and was never touched on a electrifying 80-yard touchdown run. The score put Nebraska on top 7-6. After that, Chamberlain's ability and Notre Dame's shaken defense led to two more Nebraska touchdowns. Chamberlain fired a pass to end Ted Riddell for one score and ran the other from 19 yards out. An awed Rockne later said, "Without Chamberlain, Nebraska would be easy. He's a team by himself."

After Notre Dame, Nebraska simply rolled over the

remaining foes. A 33-0 win over Kansas, which clinched Stiehm's fifth Missouri Valley title, awed one sports writer from that state to say the brilliant Chamberlain is "a bandit of the Jesse James and Quantrill variety as they used to strike terror in the hearts of Lawrence, Kan., residents, very similar to Chamberlain," as described in the book, *Go Big Red*.

In the last game of that season, Chamberlain went out in a blaze of glory. He scored four touchdowns against Iowa on runs of 45, 40 and 60 yards and caught an electrifying pass for the other touchdown. The Cornhuskers won easily, 52-7, and finished the season with an 8-0 record, the last Nebraska unbeaten season for 50 years. Only Bob Devaney would be able to match the effort with 10 wins in 1965, a half century later. Going that long without a win is no different than my old maid aunt, who went 50 years without a date. She requested in her will to be buried by six female pallbearers and no males. "The devils never took me out when I was alive — why should they take me out when I'm dead?" was her lament. Nobody ever took Nebraska out in the 50 years that followed Jumbo Stiehm and the Cornhuskers certainly were never easy pickings. But like marriages, unbeaten seasons at Nebraska were almost a once-in-a-lifetime event.

When the season ended, Nebraskans were shocked that the great Walter Camp failed to name Chamberlain to his All-American team. It is one of the greatest injustices in college football history. It's possible he intended to name Chamberlain because that year he accidentally named Halligan, a future attorney from North Platte, to his squad. Cornhuskers agreed that Halligan was a great choice for the All-American team but the problem was that Halligan had graduated from Nebraska a year earlier. In pro football Chamberlain proved he certainly was of high caliber with a distinguished career with the Canton Bulldogs, the Chicago Staleys and Frankfort Yellow-Jackets.

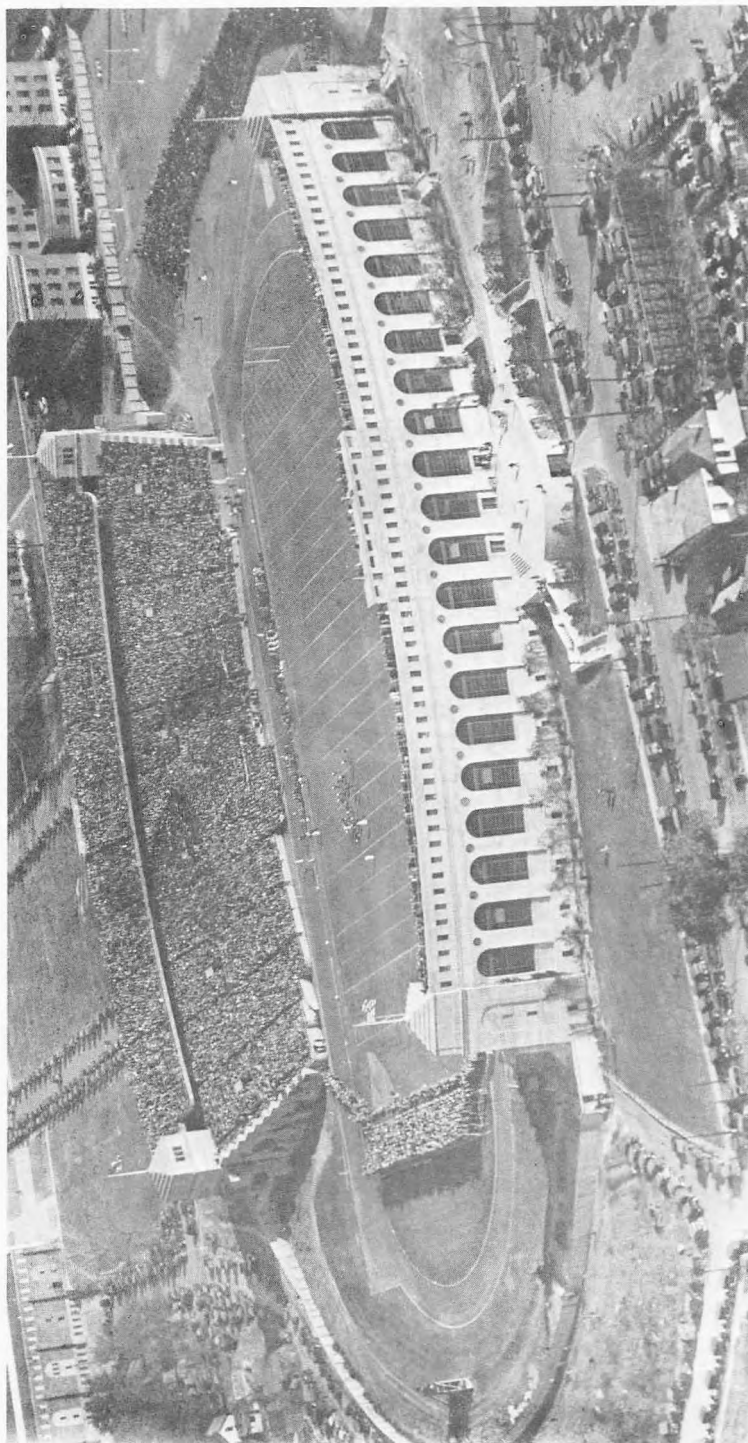
If Nebraskans were stunned when Chamberlain wasn't named an All-American, then the state was so quiet everybody could hear the first snow fall when late in the autumn Jumbo Stiehm announced he was leaving as the Cornhusker coach. One old timer said he hadn't experienced such disappointment since his wife called to say, "I just had a fight with mother — I'm coming home." The reason Stiehm decided to leave was money. Indiana University offered to pay him \$4,500 a year, more than he was making at Nebraska.

The athletic association knew only too well the contribution Stiehm was making to the football program at Nebraska. It was as clear as the guy with a sign on his van, reading: "This truck stops for all railroad crossings, stop signs, blonds, brunettes and will back up 50 feet for red heads." Stiehm had made football a profit-making operation and unofficially, the athletic association made him a counter offer. In addition to staying on as coach, Stiehm was promoted to athletic director, a reason to give him a sizeable salary increase. But in the pre-war years football was not yet king on the campus and when such a salary proposal was made to the faculty members, they balked. The professors said it was unthinkable that a football coach make more money than any teacher at the school. So when the offer fell through, Jumbo left. Today, he still is the winningest football coach Nebraska ever had.

At Wisconsin, Stiehm never reached the status he had achieved at Nebraska. He coached Wisconsin to a mediocre 20-18-1 record until 1921. In 1922, only 35 years old — younger than when Tom Osborne took over for the modern Huskers — Jumbo Stiehm died of cancer. In truth, his years at Nebraska were as brief as the reigns of Bummy Booth and King Cole. But Booth coached Nebraska against much weaker competition and King Cole never could capture the imagination of the Nebraska fans the way Jumbo did. The Stiehm Rollers of those years prior to World War I left their mark. Nebraska football teams that followed the one of 1915 were both loved and bemoaned. But they were never ignored.



My favorite spot — N.U. Stadium and my "Little Big Red" van.



The Missouri game — Oct., 1928

Chapter 4

The Road Back

DOC STEWART (11-4-0)

For the first 3½ decades, Nebraska had always looked east for its football coaches. When Jumbo Stiehm left, the athletic association went west and hired E.J. "Doc" Stewart of Oregon State. Like Jumbo, he was a coach with some ideas that were unorthodox for his era. Unlike Jumbo, his ideas were unorthodox for *any* era.

The fans had trusted Jumbo Stiehm when he played smaller but quicker football players, and no coach had ever achieved greater successes at Nebraska. So a few eyebrows were raised, but there was no actual objection when in 1916 Stewart announced that Nebraska would no longer play with a quarterback. Stewart followed that surprising statement by adding that from that point on the center would call the plays and he would no longer bend over to snap the ball. He would simply stand sideways and hike the ball back to one of the halfbacks or fullbacks. Less shocking to the fans but just as detrimental to the Nebraska program, Stewart said there would be no more of the fake handoffs and deception plays Stiehm had brought to Nebraska. If this would happen to Nebraska football in the present era, the fans would swear he was trying to do for our grid program what the Surgeon General is doing for smoking.

Despite the drastic changes, Stewart brought Nebraska to a respectable 6-2 season, one loss, an upset by Kansas, and the other, a 20-2 thrashing by Notre Dame. In 1917, Nebraska opened the fall with a 100-0 trouncing of Nebraska Wesleyan and worked to a 3-0 record that included a 7-0 win over Notre Dame. But then the wheels came off and Nebraska finished 5-2. The split in the second half of the season was enough to start fans second-guessing, but an inevitable lynching of Stewart never took place. He left of his own accord to join the war effort.

W.G. KLINE (2-3-1)

The decline of the Nebraska football program surfaced in 1918. W.G. Kline, a heralded running back at Illinois, inherited

the ailing program of Doc Stewart, known as "Doc Holliday" to some rabid fans. War had shortened the football season, allowing Kline even less time to rebuild his own program, and Nebraska finished with a 2-3-1 season. Kline's only distinction that year was a scoreless tie with Notre Dame in the great Knute Rockne's first season. That Notre Dame team also included a player named George Gipp.



Coach Pa Schulte

PA SCHULTE (8-6-3)

The Nebraska athletic association stayed within the conference when it hired Henry Frank Schulte of Missouri as its coach in 1919. Those fans not driven to the neighborhood tavern by quirks of Doc Stewart were really looking for whiskey and rye at the start of Pa Schulte's reign. Nebraska lost or tied its first five games of the season, the poorest start since football came to the school. But Schulte was a molder of men and rebuilt Nebraska's program in time. The season ended 3-3-2. One of the losses had been a well played 14-9 game against the Rock and the man who created Ronald Reagan's most important role before he became president, George Gipp of Notre Dame.

Schulte improved the Huskers to a 5-3-1 mark in 1920, one of the losses again to Notre Dame. The fighting Irish now

were carving legends with the Gipp and Rockne. In 1921, when a chance suddenly developed for Nebraska to hire a widely sought football coach named Fred Dawson, Pa Schulte quietly stepped aside and accepted the position of line coach and track coach. Schulte's step down from the head coach job also signalled the start of his time in the limelight. For the next two years, Schulte was the conditioner of Nebraska athletes. In track, he developed athletes of national acclaim. In football, he stayed in the background, conditioning and teaching Cornhusker lineman that were as important to Nebraska's continuous success as the better-known coaches and athletes.

He was a coach's coach and he was known and respected most by those closest to athletics at Nebraska, the students and players. A plaque hangs on the wall in the North Field House at Memorial Stadium in tribute to Schulte. Each year, the Big Eight Conference presents the "Pa Schulte" award to the outstanding outdoor athlete in the conference's annual track meet. To football fans in the 1920's his name was as obscure as the offensive linemen he coached. But he was a living legend to those who played for him.

FRED DAWSON (23-7-2)

Dawson, a 37-year-old student of the game, was in line for the Princeton coaching job when he stunned the eastern press by accepting the post at Nebraska. Dawson was in faltering health and was advised by his doctor to go to the midwest for some clean, fresh air. He was a New Yorker, not an Ivy Leaguer, and despite his frail health, he had the features of a boxer, complete with the crooked nose and lumpy face. Those who knew Dawson compared him to Devaney. In *The Cornhuskers*, author David Israel noted Dawson gave quite a speech. When he wished, Dawson was a man of eloquent words but in the locker room he gave it to his players straight. "Three yards! Three yards! Three yards! Just give me three yards every time you carry that damn ball!" was his most well-known pep talk.

In 1921, the Huskers gave him more than three yards — seven wins and only one loss — 7-0 at Notre Dame. For the first time in several years, star players were redeveloping at Nebraska. Clarence Swanson was the end and captain. John Pucelik at guard and Link Lyman at tackle developed in the line under Pa Schulte. A fullback named Chick Hartley was the bread-and-butter man with the football.

Nebraska opened the season with a 10-0 upset win over the great Pop Warner's Pitt Panthers. That win caught the attention of the eastern press and Swanson made the All-American teams, drawing accolades from the most famous of sportswriters, Grantland Rice. It was another Missouri Valley Title for Nebraska.

Clarence Swanson, later to become an acquaintance of mine, was the leader of that great 1921 team. His leadership won him many honors as a player and his later contributions to Nebraska football led to the "Clarence E. Swanson" award, presented to the Big Red booster who contributes the most to the success of Nebraska athletics. It is given annually by the Nebraska Hall of Fame. The first nine recipients of that award are discussed in a later chapter of this book.

The upset of Pitt at the beginning of the 1921 season had been a stunner but Dawson's greatest victory as a Nebraska coach was in 1922. Swanson had graduated from Nebraska and the Gipper also had graduated from Notre Dame. But the absence of the two dominating players from the opposing football powers did little to diminish the game, as it was as big as any Oklahoma shootout. Nebraska entered the game 6-1, with only a scoreless tie with then powerful Army to blot its record.

Sixteen thousand football fans crammed into Nebraska Field's wooden bleachers. Old-time fan Ted Lund recalls folding chairs were set up for fans where there were no bleachers. Another 5,000 stood on dusty coal piles that rested near the field. Still others climbed posts, stood on rooftops or just stood where space could be found. Some shinnied up scaffolding where today's Memorial Stadium was being constructed over the north end zone.

Notre Dame entered the season finale for both schools as a heavy favorite. But emotion was rippling in the crowd and Nebraska went into the game primed for an upset. The momentum swung to the Cornhuskers even before the game started though Notre Dame players showed little concern when the scarlet-clad Nebraskans won the coin toss. The Irish defense had allowed but 13 points all season.

Therefore, it was with some amazement that Nebraska, relying on one of Pa Schulte's sprinters named Dave Noble at halfback, knifed so easily through the Notre Dame defense. Only when the Cornhuskers moved the ball to the Irish one, did

Rockne's defensive wall stiffen. Nebraska failed on four tries to cross the goal line and Cornhusker fans witnessed first-hand why Notre Dame had built a national reputation even without the legendary Gipper.

Even that early, the game seemed to hang in the balance, as both sides fought for control at the line of scrimmage. Schulte had put together one of Nebraska's finest trench crews, including Leo Scherer, Andy Schoeppel and Bud Weller. Noble, a 200-pound speedster from Omaha, was supported by Hartley, running the football, while other Cornhusker notables of that year were Verne Lewellen, Bob Russell and the Dewitz brothers, Rufe and Herb.

Schulte's defensive line held Notre Dame to just three downs on its first possession, keeping the Irish penned in their own end zone. Momentum moved to Nebraska's side when the football could only be punted out to the 25. Dawson's troopers took advantage of the game's second scoring opportunity as Noble helped move the ball into scoring position. Hartley then broke through the Irish defense from the five and scored standing up. In the second quarter, Nebraska again crossed into Notre Dame territory and Hartley threw a 40-yard pass to Noble to give Nebraska a 14-0 lead. Nebraska warmed to the delirious home crowd on defense and resisted all Irish advances until later in the final quarter. Elmer Layden, one of the future Four Horsemen for the Irish, threw the pass for the only Notre Dame score. The final game played at Nebraska Field had been one of the most memorable, with a 14-6 Cornhusker win.

Now Nebraska officials and fans were looking forward to a new era in a stadium, built like so many across the country in the 1920's, to honor those killed in action during World War I. In the early 1920's, \$421,000 was raised privately by rabid football fans.

Coach Dawson had put Nebraska back on the winning track with a pair of 7-1 seasons and two Missouri Valley Conference titles. There was no reason to doubt that the new stadium would be the place for even greater moments of glory than the Notre Dame game of 1923. Such expectations were eventually fulfilled, although the new stadium was never kind to Coach Dawson. He never matched his seasons in Nebraska Field and fell eventually from his stature among Cornhusker fans.

The construction of a new stadium at Nebraska was a

trend for the roaring 20's. In the same year Nebraska built its double-decked stadium of 31,000 seats, Illinois residents built one for 71,000 fans. In that same year Nebraska built its stadium, the Cornhuskers opened on the road, helping Illinois dedicate its Memorial Stadium. The same day, Illinois unveiled Red Grange, the Wheaton Iceman, the Galloping Ghost. In his first college game, wearing No. 77, Grange scored three touchdowns and the Illini celebrated with a 24-7 win.

That was the start of the decline for Dawson. Two weeks later, Nebraska beat Oklahoma 24-0 on the road but then was tied in its first game at Memorial Stadium before 20,000 fans, ruled a capacity crowd because the upper level wasn't finished. The opponent was Kansas, and though Nebraska played better between the five yard lines, Kansas stopped the Cornhuskers four times on its own one to produce the deadlock. Nebraska went on to a 4-2-2 season.

But Dawson hadn't completely lost his magic. The final win of the season in 1924 was before 31,000 fans in Nebraska and nearly matched the Cornhusker win of 1923. The opponent, of course, was Notre Dame, equipped with the backfield that the great sportswriter Grantland Rice would one year later immortalize as "The Four Horsemen."

Nebraska again entered the game as a decided underdog. But the Cornhuskers did have one weapon, a sophomore named Ed Weir, who had watched from the sidelines a year earlier when Nebraska had stunned the Irish. Weir was a homebred Nebraskan from Superior and another of Pa Schulte's track hurdlers. Also, Noble was back, and though Notre Dame sported a 9-1 record and had outscored opponents 275-37, the fever was at another high pitch as the determined Irishmen entered Lincoln to avenge the previous year's loss for Rockne.

The horsemen — Juniors Don Miller, Harry Stuhldreher, Jim Crowley and Elmer Layden (later a famous coach at Notre Dame) — already were the talk of the country. In the record books, the powerful and speedy Noble recorded both Nebraska touchdowns in a stunning 14-7 win. Noble scored on a 34-yard run off tackle and later carried over a pass from Rufe Dewitz. But the best player on the field that day was a tackle named Ed Weir. Weir opened the savage holes for Noble on offense, and it was also Weir whose defensive tackling reduced the Notre Dame backfield to a quartet of mere mortals. Weir limited the Four Horsemen to one touchdown and went on to be Nebraska's

third All-American that year. He was the first to be named an All-American by Walter Camp.

The next year, October 18, 1924, Rice immortalized the Four Horsemen after watching them demolish Army:

POLO GROUNDS, N.Y., OCT. 18, 1924 — Outlined against a blue-gray October sky, the Four Horsemen rode again. In dramatic lore, they are known as Famine, Pestilence, Destruction and Sudden Death. These are aliases. Their real names are Stuhldreher, Miller, Crowley and Layden.



Ed Weir

From that date, Notre Dame became the most awesome force in college football. Real or imagined, the nation's most famous backfield became super human. Opposing teams were beaten before they took the field. The Horsemen lured the interest and following of sports fans everywhere, including Nebraska, where the Cornhuskers had a mediocre 5-3 season that year.

The Cornhuskers, 4-2 going into the 1924 game, had to play at South Bend that year. This time the frenzied cheering was by a wave of green, not scarlet. This time, it was no contest. Notre Dame rolled over Nebraska 34-6, just as it rolled over everyone that year. But one senior Nebraska tackle caught the eye of the immortal Notre Dame coach despite the lop-sided score. Weir played valiantly as he had a year before when the score was close and when his solo tackles and crushing blocks had meant the difference. "That was the greatest exhibition of play I have ever seen," Rockne told Weir in the Nebraska locker room after the game. "There was never anything like it."

Weir had started for Superior High School when he was in the eighth grade, only 14 years of age. He played then as a fullback, but the great Pa Schulte converted Weir to a tackle and at the end of the 1924 season Weir was named an All-American. He was not unlike middle guard Rich Glover of the champion Nebraska teams of the early 1970's. He could also be compared to the great center Tom Novak in that he played mainly with teams who were not champions. He had the best qualities of both players and was one of the true giants of Nebraska football history. There have been many great Nebraska football players, but you can count guys like Weir on one hand.

ELMER BEARG (27-7-3)

Dawson's 5-3 record was enough for Nebraska officials to ask for his resignation. They wanted to replace him with Illinois coach Bob Zuppke, who immediately made it known he wasn't available. But Zuppke recommended as assistant, Elmer Ernest Bearg, and he became Nebraska's 17th coach. Bearg was the complete reverse of wily Jumbo Stiehm of earlier years. Bearg stressed fundamentals and hard hitting. He wanted big players; he had little use for deception.

With Weir back, younger brother Joe at end and tackle Lonnie Stiner and center Harold Hutchinson on the team, Bearg had the kind of team he wanted. In the first game of 1925, Bearg took Nebraska to Champaign and beat his former coach and the Illini, 14-0. Weir and company provided the immortal Grange with his darkest moment as a collegiate player. The Galloping Ghost was held to a minus 40 yards rushing.

Also during the season, Weir led Nebraska's defense to a

17-0 shutout of Notre Dame before an estimated 45,000 fans in Lincoln. That was the largest crowd in Memorial Stadium until its expansion during the Devaney years. Notre Dame was in a decline year for Rockne, but the squad was still 7-2-1 and reputation of the Fighting Irish preceded the team everywhere it went. With Weir on defense, Nebraska was able to beat Notre Dame, two of three meetings including a split with the Four Horsemen.

Ed still gets a twinkle in his eye as he tells about an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 fans who surged into Memorial Stadium and filled every nook and cranny in 1925. The University campus was "robbed" of every folding chair available and people stood between the sidelines and crammed into the stadium like sardines. Every inch of space was fought for by seemingly desperate fans.

Weir says it was his greatest thrill in sports as he led his team on to the field for what was deemed by sportswriters across the nation as the game of the year.

While nearly 50,000 fans cheered themselves into a frenzy, Ed Weir and his teammates were inspired to an effort that overwhelmed the powerhouse Irish.

Coach Knute Rockne's team was loaded with great depth at every position, and one of his favorite tricks was to start the second team and let them soften up the foe. However, the gallant Cornhuskers surged ahead 14-0 before the Irish mentor decided to go back to the "first team".

The Cornhuskers, on their first possession, were stopped on their own 31, and Quarterback Jug Brown had Weir move from his tackle position to punt. The Notre Dame safety didn't realize the power that Ed had in his leg and the ball sailed over his head and rolled dead on the Notre Dame 4-yard line. Ed admits that to this day, "I can still see the quarterback running in a frantic effort to retrieve the ball".

As the Irish, who were also unable to move the ball against the pent-up defense of the Cornhuskers, tried to punt out of danger, the ball was partially blocked and went out on the 7-yard line. Three plays later, Choppy Rhodes, the "Custer County Cruiser" knifed through for a touchdown.

Ed recalled, "In the huddle, we vowed to get another touchdown". They did, as Jug Brown flipped a short pass only three yards to end Avard Mandary. Bearg was very conservative with his passing attack, and the determined Mandary broke

loose to run the remaining 27 yards for a touchdown. The versatile Weir again made good on the extra point as things looked good for the Cornhuskers.

In fact, the Irish never even came close and the superb Weir, who by this time had tossed his helmet aside, kicked a 25-yard field goal in the 3rd quarter. The Huskers were on the march again as the game ended. Weir, to this day, admits they played like it was a war.

After the 1925 game, Notre Dame officials claimed there had been some rudeness on the part of Nebraskans, both on and off the field, so this great rivalry was ended. They had a home and home series in 1947 and '48 and during our "down years" perhaps it was just as well the series had ended.

This stirring victory over the Fighting Irish was Ed's last time in a player's uniform but did not end his association with Nebraska.

He is still very active as he has a desk in Don Bryant's Information Office, where he puts in an almost daily appearance. He is always available for some kind words to any young athlete or some frustrated fan like myself. In fact, seeing this beautiful human being riding his bicycle on campus is as much an N.U. trademark as seeing backfield coach, "Big Mike" Corgan, trying to light his pipe.

The rest of the 1925 season wasn't quite as inspiring. Nebraska finished with a 4-2-2 record, including the first loss to Oklahoma in the school's history. Of course, the Sooners weren't quite so potent then. But until 1924, Nebraska had mastered Oklahoma with four wins and one tie.

Weir went on to repeat as an All-American that year and he never did stray too far from his school. He later returned as an assistant football coach and later followed in the footsteps of Pa Schulte, becoming another of Nebraska's successful track coaches. Nebraska's track stadium was named after Ed Weir in 1974.

Without Weir, Bearg still led Nebraska to 6-2 records, both in 1926 and 1927. They were conference contenders both years but in each season were victimized by deceptive Missouri teams. Bearg had always preached that the shortest distance between two end zones was a straight line. But the Nebraska alumni noticed Missouri was getting better results. The wolves were at Bearg's door.

Before the autumn of 1928, too many other things were

happening for Nebraska to search for a new coach. Nebraska joined six other Midwest schools in pulling out of the Missouri Valley conference after a successful 21 years. The six that rebelled were Kansas, Kansas State, Iowa State, Missouri Oklahoma and Nebraska. They formed the Missouri Valley Intercollegiate Athletic Association but became popularly known as the Big Six. Colorado left the Skyline Conference in 1947 to change the conference to the Big Seven and in 1957, Oklahoma State, the school which had not dropped out of the Missouri Valley Conference, rejoined the other schools to make up one of the most powerful football leagues ever assembled, the Big Eight.

Though Bearg had a reprieve with Nebraska football boosters, fans waited with hardened eyes for the Missouri rematch. Meanwhile, Nebraska disposed of three opponents before the Tiger home game behind the running of Clair Sloan and sophomore sensation Reb Russell.

Lafayette "Reb" Russell was one of the greatest athletes to ever set foot on the gridiron and one of the strangest. John Roby, the Cornhusker star from Nelson, an all-stater in 1927 and '28 and a tremendous track star, knew Russell as well as anybody in Reb's brief career as a Cornhusker.

The restless Reb enrolled at Kansas State but didn't see eye-to-eye with the coaching procedures in Manhattan and transferred to Nebraska. His campus arrival has to be the most



Mr. and Mrs. John Roby. A former two sport letterman and a couple of loyal boosters.

spectacular entrance ever made by a Cornhusker. He rode in on horseback. It was the most dazzling horse ride since Paul Revere's and the most talked about since Lady Godiva's. Roby missed the horse ride because he was a year behind Reb, but stories of the ride made him curious about his Kansas teammate.

Roby said Russell was not only a great runner but a tremendous linebacker on defense and that he and Lawrence Ely could have been the best tandem ever at Nebraska. The eccentric Russell was of Indian ancestry, and being a couple of years older than his teammates, was known as the senior citizen on the team. He and his wife had acquired some oil money, and if he had dazzled his school mates by riding in on a horse, he and his wife kept everybody entertained by driving new model Packards around campus.

Roby admitted though Reb was a great athlete, he didn't take to discipline easily. In fact, one of the reasons Reb transferred on to Northwestern University, where he became All-American after his only year at Nebraska, was because of the Lettermen's Club initiation ritual. The "N" club initiated new members with 13 whacks over the posterior and Russell refused to participate. He was willing to take his hits on the field but called this activity kid stuff.

But Russell stayed around Nebraska long enough to help Nebraska beat Missouri 24-0 which made the 1928 season a hit with the Nebraska fans. Only a few games later, Russell would be involved in the game that would break the season for the Big Red faithful.

Bearg, however, was on a collision course with Nebraska boosters. He already had lost favor by turning his back on help from Lincoln's O Street Gang. He had combined poor public relations with his unimaginative style of play.

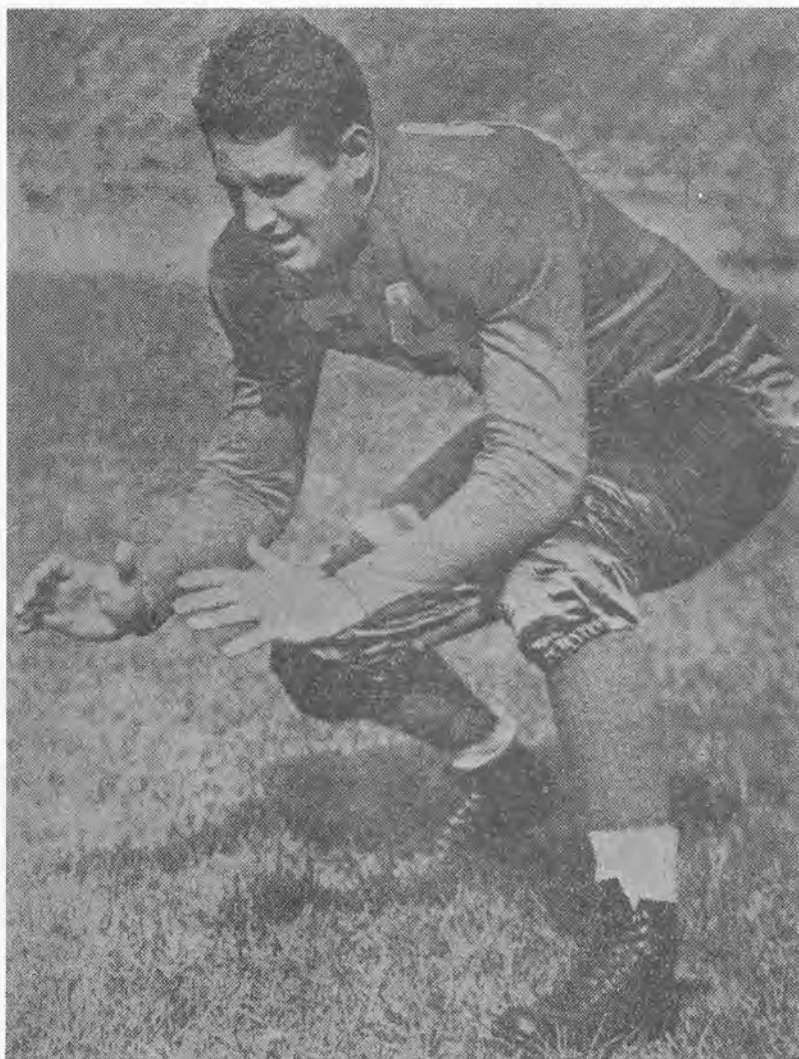
Then the lid blew off the season. Just before the big game of the year, Pittsburgh, Bearg became enraged with his team's effort in practice. Instead of a light workout the day before the game, Bearg put the Cornhuskers through a grueling, three-hour scrimmage on the practice sod. And as 25,000 faithful gathered to watch 6-0 Nebraska take on Coach Jock Sutherland and his mighty Panthers, the football players entered the stadium a weary group. The game failed to live up to expectations and both teams played listlessly. Nebraska failed to pick up a single first down, and the game ended in a scoreless tie.

Yet, there was still restraint toward Bearg. Most fans still hadn't heard about the Friday practice before the Pitt game and there was talk Nebraska might be invited to the famous Rose Bowl, the only existing college extravaganza at that time. Indeed, Bearg had received a telegram from the Rose Bowl Committee. Nebraska would be invited to Pasadena, Calif., on New Year's Day if the Cornhuskers were to beat Army the following week.

Nebraska left for West Point with high hopes. A win would likely save Bearg's job. That game was not without its controversy. Russell, who was unruly, had broken training the week before the Army game and Bearg told the football star he would be benched. Many thought Bearg would change his mind by game time, but Russell not only failed to start; he never played.

Russell's absence took the luster away from the Cornhusker attack, but Army was held in check as Clair Sloan gave Nebraska a 3-0 lead at the half with a drop-kick field goal. The game was played in the twilight of late afternoon as it had been held up for the arrival of Vice President Dawes. In the book, *Go Big Red*, Sloan recalled it was so dark by the second half, "When a fan lit a cigarette, you could see the match flare." And as the day grew darker, Nebraska's Rose Bowl hopes sank with the setting sun. One of Army's all-time great players, Chris Cagle, scored twice in the second half and the Black Knights of the Hudson mounted a 13-3 win. As Bearg left the field, he reportedly crumpled the Rose Bowl telegram in his hand and tossed it on the football field.

The next week, on Thanksgiving Day, Nebraska beat Kansas State 8-0 at Memorial Stadium and clinched the first Big Six Conference title. But there was no Rose Bowl invitation and there was little joy over the 7-1-1 season, the best record yet by Bearg. His time had run out. He knew it and he quit rather than be fired. He left Nebraska about as popular as a pick-pocket in a nudist colony, yet he left with a 23-6-3 record, the seventh-best winning percentage by any Nebraska coach. He also left with the same reputation he brought to Lincoln. He was a man of principle. He believed there was only one way to play football and he never compromised that belief. They say he was truly an optimist. He was sort of like the 79 year old widower that married a 19 year old girl and started looking for a house near a school.



John Roby — as co-captain for Oklahoma game. “Who said beauty and brains don’t go together?”

Chapter 5

The Bible

University of Nebraska officials weren't suspecting a stock market crash when they gathered their cash and went shopping for a coach in 1929. But in a year in which most securities became worthless, Nebraska had a blue chipper.

This coach was recommended by Knute Rockne, the man Nebraska and everybody else really wanted for their head football coach. The Rock told inquiring Nebraskans he was happy at Notre Dame but he suggested the Cornhusker faithful look up his old friend, Dana Xenophon Bible at College Station. He already had made a reputation as coach of the Texas A & M Aggies. At one point in his career, the native Tennessean built a 24-1-1 coaching record. He was a quiet man, balding with the appearance of the Dallas Cowboy coach, Tom Landry. He restrained his emotions but when he spoke, it was with conviction.

An athletic board that included John Selleck and Clarence Swanson met with Bible, first secretly in Kansas City, Mo., and then openly in Lincoln, where he was hired away from A & M.

Bible, despite some impressive accomplishments, knew he would always play second fiddle at Texas A & M. The Longhorns, not the Aggies, were deepest in the heart of Texas. Texas A & M was headed for a rebuilding year and Bible had never been financially appreciated by the school he had given 11 years of service and five Southwestern Conference championships. The time was never riper.

Nebraska made its financial offer and Bible accepted. But his stint at Nebraska was a nine-year lay-over between coaching at A & M and the school that was his ultimate goal, Texas. The Southwest Conference school eventually lured Bible away with a 10-year contract and a \$15,000 annual salary. Bible never cheated Nebraskans out of a single football thrill. Although he only rates sixth among Nebraska coaches for winning percentages, until Bob Devaney, Bible stands out among all the brilliant Cornhusker mentors. His teams won 50 games, lost 15 and tied seven. Nine of the losses were to two arch rivals, Minnesota and Pittsburgh, schools which held a jinx over Nebraska, similar to the one Oklahoma holds today.

Five other losses were in his first two years. The most mediocre of the Bible teams were in 1929 when the Cornhuskers compiled a 4-1-3 record and in 1930 when Nebraska was 4-3-2. The most notable game of those two years was a loss, 13-7 to another powerhouse Pittsburgh team.

NEBRASKA'S FOUR HORSEMEN

Bible's fortunes at Nebraska changed in 1930, thanks to a "fabulous foursome" which joined the freshman team. Four players, George Sauer, Bernie Masterson, Bruce Kilbourne and Clair Bishop, were building a reputation at Lincoln High School while the Bible's first Cornhusker team was achieving little notice. An exception was Ray Richards, who made All-American at tackle in 1929. That same year, the four Lincoln High classmates finished their high school career by never playing a losing game in their home town. The string carried all through their years at Memorial Stadium. The four never lost in Lincoln and all were All-Big Six selections in their senior year.

They were just as famous to Nebraskans as the Four Horsemen were to Notre Dame. Only losses to Pittsburgh, Minnesota and the lack of a press agent with the credentials of Grantland Rice kept the Nebraska quartet from the immortality of the Notre Dame Crew.

Their rise to stardom began in 1931. With an opening-season win over South Dakota out of the way, Nebraska had journeyed to Evanston, Ill., to play Northwestern. When Nebraska fell back very early in the game, Bible went to his bench, as he explained in a quote recorded by the author, David Israel, from his book, *The Cornhuskers*. About the debut of the four sophomores, Bible explained, "Our boys darned near broke down to get onto the field and I thought we were ready. But before we could stop them, Northwestern had three touchdowns in the first quarter. I decided I was going to give our sophomores a chance to play and I ran them into the game — they played most of it. They did so well, and Sauer especially, that a radio announcer giving the score that night referred to Northwestern's total as 19 and listed Nebraska's as 'Sauer, 7 points'."

The Capitol City kids were never out of the lineup again. The team won seven of its remaining eight games to finish 8-2 that year and capture the first of three straight Big Six Conference championships. The only loss was 40-0 to powerful

Pittsburgh. It was a painful defeat and after the game Bible turned to assistant coach, W.H. Browne, who had also moved up to the Nebraska team from Lincoln High, and said, "Brownie, we got the tar kicked out of us!" It was the strongest oath that Bible, who lived up to the religious billing of his name, ever made. It was as memorable as the day Tom Osborne cursed "Dad-gummit" in front of a sports writer, and that moment was captured by a national magazine.

Another Brown, the late comedian Joe E. Brown, was in the Husker locker room at the half that day. According to my good friend John Roby, whose beautiful daughter Sharon is married to former quarterback and field goal kicker Ron Meade of the 1959 Cornhuskers who upset Oklahoma, Brown was the only man in the room in fine form. Looking at a locker room of dejected Nebraska faces and mindful that Pitt had six All-Americans on its team and led by several touchdowns cracked, "Remember, boys, the game ain't over, yet."

In 1932, Bible and the Capitol City kids compiled a 7-1-1 mark, winning a second straight Big Six title. That year Bible



Seven years together without loss at home.

did as well against Pittsburgh as he ever managed, a scoreless tie. Minnesota, after a 14-year layoff, was back on the schedule again, and nipped Nebraska 7-6 for the only loss of the year.

The losses and ties to those national powers were the set backs of the season. But it was a fine one for Bible and his Cornhuskers. At the end of the season, Lawrence Ely of Grand Island, another in the line of a number of great centers, was named All-American.



Lawrence Ely

Ely was Nebraska's main graduation loss when the 1933 season rolled around but the Capitol City kids had stars dancing in everyone's eyes as they entered their senior year together. Minnesota was off the Husker schedule that year and Bible figured he could concentrate on only one giant to kill in a road trip to Pittsburgh.

The first six games were Nebraska triumphs and the Cornhuskers won their third straight Big Six crown. It was

during the Oklahoma win of that string that Hub Boswell, my boyhood hero, earned a piece of Nebraska football immortality. He recovered the football from a Nebraska kickoff in the Sooner end zone. For the rare feat, he was immortalized in "Ripley's Believe It or Not". The kickoff return man had a mental lapse on the play and Boswell just ran past him and fell on the ball. The touchdown started a 16-7 win for Nebraska.

After the game, Nebraska wrapped up the Big Six with shutout wins over Missouri and Kansas and Bible put his players on the train for the long ride to Pittsburgh. For one of the few matchups with Pittsburgh, Nebraska wasn't an underdog. By now, Sauer was considered the top back in the country and the son of a garbage collector went on to win many national honors that year. Bible was shooting for the first Nebraska unbeaten season since Jumbo Stiehm's accomplishment in 1915. The game turned out to be anti-climatic. It was a listless contest and Pittsburgh emerged a 6-0 winner.

Nebraska finished the season with wins over Iowa and Oregon State for an 8-1 season and the Cornhuskers won a No. 2 ranking behind Michigan, by the Dickinson rating system. But the Pittsburgh loss made the season only a championship that might have been.

Still, there were honors. Sauer was named All-American among such greats as Beattie Feathers of Tennessee and Cotton Warburton of Southern Cal. He was one of eight players named to the All-Big Six Team, joined by Lincolmites Masterson and Kilbourne and end Lee Penny, tackle Gail O'Brien, guard Warren DeBus, center Franklin Meier and Boswell at running back.

Sauer carried Nebraska's colors in the annual East-West Shrine game in San Francisco, then the only all-star game around. He scored both touchdowns in a 12-0 West win and earned this tribute from East coach Andy Kerr: "Sauer was the star of the game. He is a true All-American." National syndicated columnist Lawrence Perry said: "George Henry Sauer, a German-American boy hailing from Lincoln, Nebraska, stands clearly as the premier ball carrier of the nation." Sauer also led the nation in balloting when the College All-Star team was selected to play the National Football League champion in the now-defunct classic sponsored by the *Chicago Tribune*.

Sauer went on to play three years with the Green Bay Packers. He retired in 1937 and went into teaching and the

administrative end of the game. He coached at Kansas and Baylor and was the player personnel director with the old Boston Patriots and later the New York Jets.

But the winter of 1934 was one for second-guessing. There were those who criticized Bible for not beating Pittsburgh and others who remembered he failed to beat Minnesota the year before. Defenders quickly pointed out those two powerhouse opponents had an unfair advantage because they offered athletic scholarships while Nebraska didn't. In those years, many maintained Minnesota and Pittsburgh could have given most NFL teams a run for their money. Nebraska's failure to beat Pittsburgh that year was the main topic for debate around hot stove discussions during those long, cold Nebraska winter evenings.

Those debates drifted into concern about Cornhusker replacements for the next fall. Fans saw no immediate replacements for the nation's No. 2 team and nobody was quite sure about the years ahead.



Coach D.X. Bible — a real "Dapper — Dana!"

Chapter 6

Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside

Fans uncertain about Nebraska's football fortunes after the graduation of the Capitol City standouts just didn't look deep enough. They hadn't paid much attention to the 1933 freshman team and two of its top players, a native Kansan named Sam Francis and a Seward standout, Lloyd Cardwell. They were two players who cast even longer shadows than Sauer and Masterson, by the time they were seniors.

Cardwell, nicknamed the "Seward Sensation", scored the first time he touched the football in 1934 and a new Nebraska hero was born as Nebraska punished Wyoming 50-0. Oddly, Cardie also scored the last time he touched the football as a Nebraska senior in a 33-14 win over Oregon State two years later.

Fred Ware, sports editor for the Omaha World-Herald, was completely taken by Cardwell and dubbed him the "Wild Hoss" because of his loping style of running. One national sportswriter wrote, "There is no player in the nation that could outrun Cardwell from goal line to goal line."

Meanwhile, Sam Francis, slower to develop, became a power inside runner. Once Francis established himself, he became known as "Mr. Inside" and, of course, Cardwell was "Mr. Outside."

Both were recruited to Nebraska by the old track coach, Pa Schulte, who had developed several All-American linemen for Bearg and Bible. With Bible's blessing, Schulte sold the cinder sport to both players as an off season pursuit. Cardwell was a brilliant sprinter, hurdler and long jumper. If there had been a triple jump in those days many say Cardwell would have been in the Olympics.

Francis was an Olympian. He was a world class weightman and a member of the 1936 Olympic team which performed in Berlin where Jesse Owens won four gold medals and humiliated Adolph Hitler by beating his Arian athletes. Francis didn't win a medal, but the Oberlin, Kan., shot putter returned to Nebraska a bonafide hero.

In their first season together in 1934, Cardwell and Francis helped Nebraska to a 6-3 season, two of those losses to

Minnesota and Pittsburgh and the other to Kansas State. The losses to Minnesota and Pitt were decisive and the difference in attitudes between those schools and Nebraska led Cardie to one of his favorite stories. "When we played Pittsburgh, those guys wouldn't believe we weren't getting our tuition paid," said Cardwell, in the book, *The Cornhuskers*, and he worked six nights a week at the Lincoln Star Newspaper. "So we said we were. We didn't want to seem dumb, playing for nothing."

That season, Francis earned the nickname "Rambling Sam" as the sophomore tailback in Bible's single and double-wing offenses. He also was the team's punter and an effective passer. The constant line banging by Francis set up the electrifying reverse runs by Cardwell. Both also were great defensive players. At safety, Cardie was compared to Joe DiMaggio, the Yankee Clipper, playing center field. John Bentley, the late sports editor of the Lincoln Journal and former Nebraska sports information director, always said it was a shame that pass interceptions weren't recorded in Cardie's day. He said Cardwell probably set a record that would be untouchable. If a receiver did catch the ball, Cardwell made the player regret it. As a tandem, Cardwell and Francis struck so much terror in the hearts of opposing linemen that many fans said they made the 1930 gangsters Bonnie and Clyde look like Sunday School teachers.

The opener of the 1935 season, played at the University of Chicago, was a show-down contest between the great All-American halfback, Jay Berwanger, and Cardwell. Berwanger had the pre-season build-up of a sure-fire Triple Crown winner and lived up to the reputation by scoring shortly after the opening kickoff. Just as Nebraska fans were slumping in their seats, Cardwell took the Chicago kickoff and returned it on an 87-yard, zig-zagging touchdown run. He added two more during the fray to easily outduel the talented Berwanger as Nebraska won 28-7.

Nebraska went onto another 6-2-1 season, the losses again to Minnesota and Pittsburgh and the tie again with Kansas State.

By 1936, Francis surpassed Cardwell in national recognition. It was the rabbit and hare story. The speedy Cardwell started fast and earned instant recognition for his exciting runs. The plodding Francis handled the bread-and-butter carries, but complimented them with his fine kicking

and excellent passing to earn national recognition in his final year. Francis, who passed left handed and kicked left footed, made most All-American teams and finished second to Yale end Larry Kelly in the Heisman Trophy balloting. It was the highest Nebraska finish for that honor until Johnny Rodgers won it in 1972.

Nebraska started the 1936 season with a 34-0 shelling of Iowa State but then had to travel to Minneapolis to play the loaded Gophers. Nebraska took the game into the final minute before losing and Bible called the loss the greatest disappointment of his coaching career. Both Cardwell and Francis were at their best, but were contained by the vicious Minnesota defense. Francis continued to batter the line with his powerful body but was knocked unconscious midway into the final quarter.

Even with Francis on the sidelines, Nebraska advanced the ball down the field late in the game. A scoreless tie seemed possible but Johnny Howell failed to reach a first down at the



Sam Francis

Nebraska 33. So with 58 seconds left, makeshift punter Ron Douglas went into the game for the injured Francis. He tried to kick the ball long and high and out-of-bounds. The ball traveled long and high, but before it left the playing field a player named Bud Wilkinson scooped up the football. In a continuous motion, he heaved it over his head to teammate Andy Uram, a speedy halfback. While Wilkinson absorbed Nebraska's crunching tackles, Uram escaped down the sidelines for a 70-yard score. It was the first of many times that Wilkinson had a hand in beating Nebraska. He did it more regularly as the great coach at Oklahoma. But it hurt just as bad in 1936, when Minnesota nosed out Nebraska 7-0.

The shock was still lingering a week later. Nebraska trailed Indiana 9-0 and Francis watched from the sidelines where he still was plagued by dizzy spells. At halftime the stern-but-quiet Bible delivered his most famous locker room speech. First, he questioned the team's desire to play and its loyalty to the school. Then he said he would start the first 11 players to make it on the field because he would know they had the desire and were ready to play. According to the book, *Go Big Red*, there was a rush of players to the doorway, but Bible blocked the exit. Once again, he questioned the intestinal fortitude of his players and delivered more fiery words of inspiration.

When he stepped aside, the door blew open. The scarlet-clad Cornhuskers entered the field with tears in their eyes. The injured Francis was so emotionally stirred, he convinced the coaches to let him play and came off the bench to help with a 13-9 comeback win. Hysterical Husker fans screamed themselves hoarse and Nebraska rediscovered its heart, shattered from the Minnesota loss.

After Indiana, Nebraska didn't surrender a point in wins over Oklahoma, Missouri and Kansas. But emotional words and team loyalty weren't enough when Nebraska hosted Pittsburgh. The Panthers won 19-6. Nebraska still won the Big Six title and finished as the No. 9 team in the nation that year with a 7-2 record.

There were plenty of national honors to go around for both Francis and Cardwell. In addition to finishing second in the Heisman trophy voting, and ahead of the great quarterback Sammy Baugh, the bruising Francis led 1,500 players in the nation with an efficiency rate of 97.85 percent. Concerning the 19-6 loss to Pittsburgh, the Associated Press called Francis the

best back on the field and Henry McLemore of the United Press wrote "Francis stood out like a stilt-walker at a midgets' convention. He literally tore the Pitt line apart with his drives."

The thing that many Nebraskans, including myself, will remember about Cardwell was a picture in the Omaha World-Herald showing Cardy as four aces which was to signify he was a four threat man instead of a triple threat back. The sketch, issued at the start of his career, was truly prophetic about Cardy's abilities. (See page 61)

Almost forgotten in the shadows of Francis and Cardwell was one other fine football player, Les McDonald. A Grand Island boy, McDonald was a No. 1 draft pick at end by the Chicago Bears, giving the Huskers three first-round draft selections in 1937. McDonald was picked by the Chicago Bears, Francis by the Philadelphia Eagles and Cardwell by the Detroit Lions.

Francis and Cardwell were heroes among heroes in my boyhood days. It was my good fortune to meet them in later years and become closely acquainted. Cardwell, a retired track coach with the University of Nebraska-Omaha, and Francis, a retired serviceman living in Springfield, Mo., are in fine shape today. We see each other at home games and I often kid them to loosen up before they watch the game because coach Tom Osborne might wish to enter them into the fray should the situation become desperate.

It was my pleasure to be on the board of directors when both men were voted into the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame, a foregone conclusion. They made my boyhood glory years and they provided thousands of Nebraskans with golden moments. This they did without a free ride since there were no scholarships. Cardwell had to squeeze football in between school and a six-day-a-week job. For such character, both men stand as tall as any football greats to ever wear the colors of scarlet and cream.

In an open letter to Cardwell, just before his spring graduation, The World-Herald's Ware wrote:

Dear Cardy:

The home campus has seen the last of you as a Cornhusker and as far as most Nebraskans are concerned that means you are through . . .

It'd be easy, Old Hoss, to work myself into a maudlin mood. All I'd have to do is reflect on your deeds of the past three seasons, and then remind myself I'll never see you in Nebraska's scarlet again.

Your days of helping clinch conference track championships

for "the old man" by winning events which you seldom practiced, are over.

You're through playing the outfield for the football team when the other side has the ball. I wonder if I'll ever see another player streak from one sideline to the other and knock down an enemy pass. I saw you do that more than once. . . .

I could recall a great many other brilliant and unusual and unorthodox didoes, Cardy, for you perpetuated them almost every time you moved. You did things that alumni and other favored followers will call up from memory and relive fondly, and a little wistfully, for years to come.

You are the greatest competitor I ever saw. You are more than that. You are one of the finest team men. . . .

Both Francis and Cardwell left Nebraska to go on to successful seasons in the pro football league, though Francis had his playing time shortened because of the army. Cardy returned to Nebraska after seven years with the Detroit Lions to coach track and football at the University of Omaha.

In that same spring, D.X. Bible announced that he also was leaving Nebraska to coach at the University of Texas. There he coached 10 years and became athletic director before retiring. In the spring of 1937, there was a loss such as Nebraskans had never felt before. The departure of Francis and Cardwell was expected, but sorrowful. The loss of Bible was an unexpected shock. Great coaches come and go, but Nebraskans were accustomed to Bible's uphill struggles against the football factories of his era. The Cornhuskers seldom were successful when overmatched by Minnesota and Pittsburgh but they were always guided by a steady, confident hand. Now, that too was gone.

If this event had happened in Liz Taylor's glory years, some wag would have remarked, "I know how Eddie Fisher feels now."



Les McDonald — Grand Island end.



Lloyd Cardwell — "Not a triple threat — a four threat man."

Chapter 7

The Warrior

D.X. Bible, a true southern gentleman, was not a man to run out on the state he had served so well. There were bitter fans and the state was plunged in gloom. One wry fan at the time commented it was too bad there wasn't a back door to the Alamo or the state of Texas might not be around. Before leaving, Bible advised Nebraska school officials to hire another southerner, Lawrence "Biff" Jones, coach at Louisiana State University. Wisely, Nebraska officials listened.

Jones was an army man, and he brought his military philosophies into his coaching profession. They first worked at West Point, where in the 1920's he compiled a 30-8-2 record. He also had played at West Point as a cadet during the war years. He received a transfer that took him out of coaching and in 1932, he accepted a coaching job with LSU under two conditions: (1) he be allowed to teach military science so he wouldn't have to resign his commission; (2) it was okay with the Chief of Staff, Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

In three years, he built a 20-5-6 mark with the Baton Rouge Bengals, despite run-ins with Louisiana's famous senator, Huey Long. Both men had flamboyant personalities and a clash between the two was inevitable. It came in 1934 during the last game of the season. The Tigers had lost two straight games and were trailing Oregon 13-0 at the half. The Kingfish burst into the lockerroom and David Israel, sports columnist for the Washington Star, has this account of the incident from his research on Nebraska football for his book, *The Cornhuskers*:

Long wanted Jones to let him talk with the players during the intermission. Jones didn't want any interruptions and said no.

"Who's going to stop me? Kingfish demanded.

"You're not going to talk."

"Well, I'm sick and tired of losing and tying games. You better win this one."

"Well, Senator, get this: Win, lose or draw, I quit."

LSU rallied to win 14-13, and Jones did quit. In 1935, he took the Oklahoma helm, where he raised the Sooners to a second-place finish. The next season he didn't do as well, but Nebraska officials still came calling and Jones accepted the Cornhusker coaching job.

In 1937, Jones was faced with a rebuilding year, but in his

opening game he did something Bible could never manage. He beat Minnesota 14-9 at Memorial Stadium before 37,000 delirious fans. The Gophers, led by Larry Buhler, Vic Spadaccini and Andy Uram, again were awesome for coach Bernie Bierman. The visitors immediately took the opening kickoff and marched 63 yards for a touchdown. But Nebraska tied the score just before the half on a four-yard plunge by Johnny Howell.

The third period was scoreless, but Minnesota was in control of the game and went ahead 9-7 on a field goal early in the fourth quarter. Time was slipping away and fans were resigning themselves to what seemed meant to be when Grand Islander Bill Callihan recovered a fumble on the Minnesota 40. Jones, knowing there was less than a half quarter remaining and Nebraska's ground game was failing, ordered an aerial attack.

Quarterback Harris Andrews, a little man with a big arm, first fired to rangy Elmer Dohrmann for a 20-yard gain. The next pass was incomplete over Dohrmann's head but then Andrews reloaded and found Wild Bill Callihan alone in the middle of the field. The Third City powerhouse loped in a straight line into the end zone and Nebraska had broken free of the Minnesota chains. The Gophers responded with a frantic passing attack, but Nebraska's defenders held on desperately and Andrews intercepted two passes to complete the upset.

Jones called it the toughest game he had ever seen and the Cornhusker faithful agreed. There was a celebration that only



Jack McConnell — "They should have St. Patrick's Day every month."

Jack McConnell, the Irish farm director for Grand Island radio station KMMJ, could appreciate on St. Patrick's day.

Nebraska later was unable to duplicate the magic against Pittsburgh without the backing of its fans and lost on the road 13-7. There also were ties with Oklahoma and Kansas, but it still was some debut for Jones. Nebraska finished 6-1-2 and Charley Brock was named All-American at center. Tackles Fred Shirey and Ted Doyle, guard Bob Mehring and quarterback Johnny Howell joined Brock as All-Big Six selections.



Charlie Brock — one of a long line of great centers.

Other top seniors that year were Dohrmann, who won 11 school varsity letters, more than any other Nebraska athlete in the school's history, and Paul Amen, now the state's banking director who won a total of eight and was on the 1936 Olympic baseball squad that played exhibition baseball in Europe.

In 1938, Jones decided to make some changes. The year before, he had wanted a winning record in order to win over the Nebraska fans. Jones, military man that he was, believed battles were won with better-trained forces. He was concerned with the lack of depth at Nebraska, realizing Bible had rarely gone deeper than 11 players to win or lose football games. This was his true rebuilding year. He placed substitute after substitute onto the field to develop the depth he felt Nebraska needed. The Cornhuskers paid a high price for this training. Nebraska had its first losing season, 3-5-1, in 20 years. Only in the war year of 1918, had Nebraska dipped below .500 with a 2-3-1 mark. It was only the second losing season in the school's history.

This was the year the infamous "Giggling Girl" slur against Nebraska was started. Nobody knows how the tag was initiated, but someone started a rumor that Nebraska players were giggling in the huddle of one game. This angered some of the less patient fans as Nebraskans dipped to a 1-5-1 record at one point in the season. But Nebraska players suffered silently, and in 1939, Jones brought his rebuilt troops back to a 7-1-1 record.

Any doubts about the dedication of the Nebraska players or the ability of Biff Jones were laid to rest that year. For the first time in one season, Nebraska beat Pittsburgh and Minnesota. The Cornhuskers started slow, with a 7-7 tie against a very competitive Indiana squad but came back to Memorial Stadium in the second game and thrilled fans with a 6-0 win over Minnesota. Then Nebraska whipped Iowa State, Baylor and Kansas State before running into Missouri.

The Tigers ended Jones' shot at an unbeaten season as All-American quarterback Paul Christman led the win over the visiting Cornhuskers 27-13. "Pitchin' Paul," as he was known in his playing days, later became a television announcer and angered some Nebraskans for some on-the-air criticism of the Cornhuskers. But as a friend once told me, the late Paul Christman usually was sincere in whatever he said. The problem with the Missouri ace was that he was blessed with confidence to a point where he made Howard Cosell seem humble. In fact, he was so self-assured that he was kind of like the guy who would go after Moby Dick in a rowboat with a harpoon and a jar of tarter sauce.

In his playing days, Christman was a widely quoted athlete who was sassy and could chide an opponent. Unfortunately for

opponents, Christman was similar to former New York Jet quarterback Joe Namath or heavyweight fighter Muhammed Ali. All three could always back up what they promised.

Against Nebraska that year, Christman let his arm do the talking and his bulls-eye passes picked apart the Nebraska secondary with the ease of a vulture cleaning up carcasses in a Utah desert. His throws went mostly to the Missouri Orf twins and other wide receivers who worked so confidently that day against Nebraska defenders.

Nebraska rebounded the next week against Kansas and then earned the nation's respect by traveling to Pittsburgh and beating the Panthers 14-13. The Cornhuskers closed out the season with a 13-7 win over Oklahoma at Memorial Stadium. Despite Nebraska's 7-1-1 overall mark, 8-2 Missouri won the Big Six Conference title that year. All Nebraskans could do was say, "Wait until next year."



Shades of the Rose Bowl. It's Biff Jones (center) with Rose Bowlers Rohrig, Francis, Hopp and Petsch (left to right).



Wayne Meylan and Ed Weir — “Two great two-time all-Americans.”



Kris Van Norman — “The Minden Mangler”

Chapter 8

The Rose Bowl

In 1940, Coach Biff Jones did something no other Nebraska coach may ever be able to do — he took Nebraska to the Rose Bowl. He did it without offering a single athletic scholarship to one of his players and with 38 of 39 members being native Nebraskans. Those are things that just won't happen again.

It's always possible that the Rose Bowl could drop its contracts with the Big 10 and Pacific 10 Conferences, making it again possible for Nebraska to receive a bowl bid. But though Nebraska still relies heavily on in-state recruiting, Cornhusker coaches today travel the nation to try to find the best possible players for their team. A school that doesn't recruit its athletes from across the country just won't survive in major college football.

Even in 1940 things weren't easy for colleges which didn't offer scholarships to athletes. During the entire decade of the 1930's Nebraska had paid the price by constantly losing to Minnesota and Pittsburgh. But by 1940, many other schools were recruiting athletes. In his book on Nebraska football, author David Israel tells how Lincoln Star sports editor Cy Sherman — the man who named the Cornhuskers — strong-armed Lincolnite Herman Rohrig, my good friend, into attending the University of Nebraska. Similiar to George Sauer, who rose to All-American status from the humble beginnings of the son of a garbage collector, Rohrig came from a modest background. He was the son of the janitor who cleaned out the Lincoln Star building. Rohrig had never been contacted by a Nebraska official to play football for the Cornhuskers, but he and a Lincoln High teammate, Bill Pfeiff, had been invited by Alabama school officials to visit the campus at Tuscaloosa. Both players were offered scholarships.

Rohrig, 17 at the time, was called in by Cy Sherman for a chat. According to Israel's account of the incident, Sherman told Rohrig to go to school at Nebraska or that he would see that his father was fired from his janitorial position at the Lincoln Star. Whatever the reason, Rohrig stayed in Nebraska and himself became a part-time janitor with the local power

company, working four hours a night.

At Nebraska, Rohrig made the most of his decision. He went on to become a starting tail-back, became a National Football League official and also head of the Big Ten Conference officials. I might add that fame has never changed Hermie as he is still a humble Nebraska boy.

Choices were not always so difficult for all Nebraska football players on the 1940 team, but almost all of the players were home-fed. There were players such as Butch Luther, the Cambridge Comet. Harry "Hippity Hopp" hailed from Hastings. Vike Francis, Sam's kid brother from Hebron, was on the squad. Other top players were Ray Prochaska, Allen Zikmund (later a great coach and athletic director at Kearney State College), Wayne Blue, All-American tackle Forrest Behm, Roy Petsch, Dale Bradley and Fred Meier. They were Nebraskans all.

They were the group so ridiculed in Jones' rebuilding year of 1938 and they shared the heartbreak as juniors in the near-miss season of 1939. In 1940, they were the seniors who did it all. In three years, they had been carefully nurtured by Jones and molded into two platoons. When the Cornhusker first two units scrimmaged, it usually was a standoff. By this time, I felt like an expert on Nebraska football information and I used to tell anybody who would listen, that even the third team could have beaten many of the college teams of the 1940's.

The third unit could field such players as Theos Thompson at quarterback, Dale Bradley at tailback, Grand Island ace Bob Kahler at wingback and Wayne Blue at fullback. Howard Kelly of Grand Island, one of the finest chaps I ever knew, was the third-string center.

By the start of the 1940 season, Jones had the powerful military machine he wanted. He could mostly rely on his ground forces to win. His offense could march with a disciplined sense of purpose. His defense formed an impregnable line. Only when necessary, would he resort to an aerial attack. Jones wanted no more than a dozen passes thrown in a game; he was a foot soldier.

The season started on a flat note. Nebraska had to travel to the north land as so many times in its history to play powerful Minnesota. The Gophers were the same old bunch of power players, and though for the first time Nebraska was truly a Big Red Machine, the Cornhuskers just didn't win the skirmish.

Luther, the Blond Bullet who later was to give his life in World War II, could have put Nebraska in front with a 66-yard run which stunned the usually well-treated Minnesota fans. But the play was called back because of an off-sides penalty. Minnesota scored on a touchdown pass play in the final quarter to win 13-7.

Nebraska returned home to defeat Indiana 13-7 and then started mowing down opponents. On the road, the Cornhuskers regained their national attention by punishing the Jayhawks 53-2. Back in Memorial Stadium, the Cornhuskers avenged their 1939 loss to Missouri with a 20-7 win before 38,000 fans. Christman was held to just 78 yards, most in the final quarter, and completed but 10 of 30 passes. At Oklahoma, Nebraska won easily, 13-0. A following game in Memorial Stadium against Iowa was tough, but Nebraska won 14-6.

Once again, however, Nebraska had to play Pittsburgh. It was too early for bowl talk, but the last time the Cornhuskers had taken a train east in such a situation was in 1928. At Nebraska, the big crash had come a year early. The Cornhuskers had been promised the Rose Bowl if they could beat Army, but failed under the stormy Ernie Bearg. Fans weren't taking anything for granted against Pittsburgh, but they weren't without hope either. This time, there weren't any pre-game controversies to pre-occupy the players.

Nebraska won the game 9-7 on a field goal by Vike Francis after the team had missed its extra point. Clarence Herndon, a Grand Islander, made the defensive play of the game by streaking through the Panther trenches to block a field goal snapped at Nebraska's 10. Herndon was the "senior citizen" on the team, older than most of the players but respected for working his way through school. He was never more admired than in those final seconds of the Pittsburgh game.

Then came the Iowa State game (the one during which I cut my finger just so I could hear the outcome on the radio). There had been a let down after the tough win over Pittsburgh, and Iowa State had an upset in the offing with a 12-0 lead at the half.

Since the game was being played at Memorial Stadium, Nebraska fans were in disbelief. In the book, *The Cornhuskers*, one writer perfectly described the mood of the day. "It was upset weather, the kind of weather that unmercifully

neutralizes greatness, the kind of weather that seems to reward mediocrity."

Rohrig said that Jones' halftime lecture made the difference, and one account of the locker room events of that day claims that line coach Link Lyman broke a chair over a table during his fiery oratory. Lyman yelled at his players for being dazzled by bowl talk and filling their heads with visions of palms and roses. Then he asked them to win the game for Pa Schulte, the great line and track coach who retired at the end of 1939 because of failing health. "Up there, on the terrace, bundled in a car, is Henry Schulte — good old Pa. He sent word down that he wants you to win this one for him," Lyman said.

The Nebraska players dwelled on Iowa State and their beloved track coach and ignored the inclement weather and the bowl talk to go back and score three touchdowns.

As I so well recall from my first-aid station radio post, Nebraska went back onto the field in a fury. By the end of the third quarter, Nebraska went ahead 14-12. Hopp scored from the one on a second-half opening drive and Prochaska, the Ulysses strongboy, blocked a punt at the Cyclone 16 to set up a two-yard touchdown carry by Vike Francis. Then Luther sealed the win with a lightning 58-yard run, causing me to let out a cry and the nurse to think I was in excruciating pain from the finger I had purposely cut just to listen to the broadcast. I remember her candidly asking me if there was any sanity in my family.

The next week (while my finger healed) talk of a bowl game became intense and Rose Bowl officials let it be known that if the Cornhuskers could beat Kansas State, they could have the bid. By now the 7-1 Cornhuskers knew better than to look any further than their next opponent, and Luther gained 161 yards on 19 carries and scored two touchdowns as Nebraska ended the season with a 20-0 win and a Big Six Conference title.

Though Minnesota was No. 1 in the country, it was ineligible to go to the bowl that year, so No. 2-ranked Nebraska players expected to get the call. A week went by with no word. Another one of the Rose Bowl candidates, Texas A & M, had a Thanksgiving date with Texas. But D.X. Bible led the Longhorns to an upset and publicly said, "It was one of my most satisfying victories, because it helped Nebraska."

Still there was no call. It was not until late Sunday night when word first spread through the Nebraska dormitories.

There were curfews in effect, but student gentlemen grabbed ladders and escorted their sorority girl friends out the windows. It was a night in Lincoln for rejoicing and celebrating.

Word didn't travel as fast in 1940 and most of the rest of the state didn't really know what happened until they read their Monday newspaper. To the day I die, the headline "Nebraska to Rose Bowl" is engraved on my mind. School was called off at the University, and barber shops and taverns were filled elsewhere across the state. It was the biggest news story to hit the state since William Jennings Bryan ran for president. Until then, Nebraska football had been a topic confined to those of us who lived in the state. Now Nebraskans were watching their team as the rest of the country watched it. Suddenly, there was talk of a Stanford team nobody had really paid attention to before. Overnight, Frankie Albert, quarterback of one of the finest college backfields ever put together, became a household word.

Stanford, with its backfield of Frankie Albert, halfbacks Pete Kmetrovic and Hugh Gallarneau and fullback Norm Standlee, was rated lower than Nebraska in most rankings, but the '41 Rose Bowl game actually had no underdog. All four Stanford backs went on to be professional players. It was a great intersectional matchup.

Jones had a strategy problem. He had to prepare his team to defense the T-Formation. It was a new version of an old offense few teams used anymore. Sports scribes called the formation "so old — it was new." Nebraska hadn't played a T-Formation team. Also, Stanford coach Clark Shaughnessy invented the T-Formation, so nobody executed it any better.

But Jones was the master of preparation and he tried everything possible. He sent assistant coaches W.H. Browne and Link Lyman to Chicago to watch how the pro teams worked the T-Formation. Fortunately, it wasn't the game in which Chicago won the NFL championship over the Washington Redskins 73-0 that year, or the coaches might have wanted to call off the Rose Bowl game right then. Instead, former star and future coach Bernie Masterson was quarterbacking the Bears at that time and offered all the help he could but admitted it is a tough formation to defense.

Next, Jones used a couple of frosh stars, Bob Cooper of Omaha and Lincolnite Fred Metheny, to try to imitate the left-handed Albert on offense during practice. Cooper was a

natural southpaw while Metheny, now a California judge, was one of the best prep signal callers to graduate in his era. Both players were small and quick and they duplicated Albert's behaviorisms the best they could.

Finally, after being unable to cope with a snowy December in Lincoln, Jones decided to transport his players to Phoenix to practice the entire week before Christmas. Nebraska went in style, aboard a train that had three Pullman cars, a private diner and a club car.

But on the way, the train stopped at El Paso. Many of the players actually took a short trip across the border so they could say they were in Mexico. Unfortunately, nobody told them about being in Mexico. Rohrig said he and the other Nebraska players were too naive to know not to drink the water. "All of us were sick in Arizona and we were as weak as puppies for the game," Rohrig related.

In Phoenix, the players recuperated as much as they practiced. While Jones didn't have to worry about the good manners of his players, he nearly had cardiac arrest over their touring habits. Two players, Roy Petsch and Henry Rohn, were stopped just in time as they tried to enter a local rodeo as bronco riders.

Despite all the misadventures, all the players were aboard when the Rose Bowl train rolled into Los Angeles on Dec. 31. Along for the games were 5,000 lucky Nebraska ticket holders. This was the amount allotted to the Cornhusker fans. But most of the Cornhusker faithful popped corn and gathered by a living room radio to listen to the account of the game by Graham McNamee and Bill Stern.

Nebraska took the field in front of 90,000 fans, more than double the size of any crowd to that date at Memorial Stadium. But the Cornhuskers kept their mind on business as Vike Francis returned the opening kickoff 28 yards out to the 47. Both Francis and Luther carried the ball early when Jones tried to switch between strength and speed as his offense worked into the Stanford line. Without even trying a pass, Nebraska moved the ball to the one and on first down, Francis bulled over for a touchdown and then kicked an extra point for a 7-0 lead.

But when Stanford took the offense, it was apparent that Nebraska still was unsure of the T-Formation. The defensive coaches had dropped All-American guard Warren Alfson back with the linebackers in a 5-3-2-1 defense, but Nebraska's

split-second timing couldn't match that of the well-polished T-Formation Stanford had been using all year. On its first possession, Stanford also marched downfield and Gallarneau scored from the nine on a draw play to tie the score.

Nebraska hopes were raised in the second quarter when the usually steady Albert fumbled on his own 33 and the fleet Zikmund fell on the loose ball. On the very next play, Rohrig tossed a 33-yard pass to Zikmund and Nebraska took back a 13-7 lead.

But five minutes later, Stanford went back in front, this time for keeps. Albert, noticing the Cornhuskers were tightening up to stop Stanford's powerful running game, dropped back and threw a 40-yard touchdown pass to Gallarneau. Nebraska, still leaking on defense, managed to keep the lead to one point at half.



Warren Alfson — All-American

But even the halftime adjustments couldn't stop the Stanford T-Formation. The Indians again moved the ball on the ground as Nebraska coaches searched for ways to stop the advances. While using much of the clock that quarter, Stanford pushed the ball to the Nebraska two with a first down. But on four tries, Indian ball carriers ran into a wall of iron. More on determination than strategy, the Cornhuskers stopped the drive.

Nebraska couldn't move the ball on offense, however, and "Hippity" Hopp was forced to punt from his own end zone. The kick was a powerful one, forcing Stanford's Kmetrovic back to the 50 to field it, near the sideline. The speedy back gave ground, reversed his field and, finding a wall of blockers, went in for a game-clinching touchdown.

The game was particularly frustrating for me. It was a holiday, so I was free and clear to hear the radio broadcast without using further injury to my body as an excuse. I listened with exhilaration and frustration as the tide of the game turned in the first half on our battery-operated radio at the farm. At the very moment George Abel, a speedy linebacker and track sprinter, picked off a Frankie Albert pass, the battery conked out. All I could do was envision the lightning-fast Abel outlegging the whole Stanford team toward the goal line. I felt like the proverbial "Born Loser," the guy who gets his junk mail with postage due or the one who swears his luck is so bad his obscene phone calls come collect. It wasn't until much later in the evening that I learned the sad news about the outcome of the game and that George Abel was tackled after a fairly good return of the intercepted pass.

Once the game was lost, local announcers respectfully adhered to the state's mourning by not giving out the score. That was fine, since, except for me, everyone had heard the outcome.

The Stanford loss dropped Nebraska to an 8-2 season, and the year doesn't stand out among season records quite like it should. The 1940 Nebraska team was one of the best and the magic of the Rose Bowl made the players seem even bigger and stronger. The excitement of playing in front of a national audience was enough to erase much of the sting from the loss. When football fortunes dropped in following years, Nebraska fans always had stories from 1940 to carry them through.

My good friend and former N.U. basketball coach, the late Jerry Bush, recalled what it was like moving into the state in

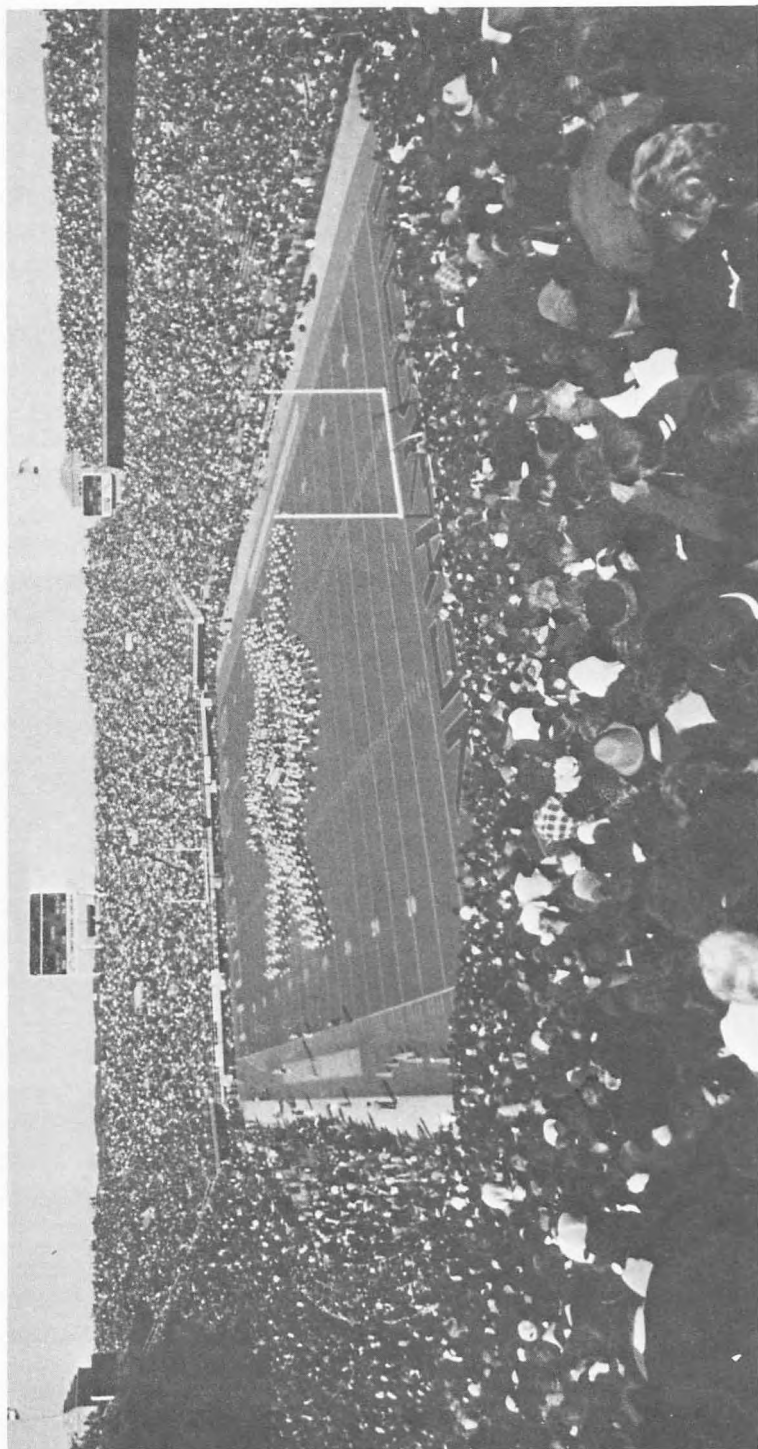
those following years. "Heck, I lived in the state of Nebraska five years before I found out that Nebraska didn't win the Rose Bowl game," Bush used to joke.

When the 1941 season came, most of the players from the great Rose Bowl team were gone. Once again, Biff Jones was faced with a complete rebuilding job. The Rose Bowl pride carried the Nebraska team to wins in its first two games, but starting with Indiana, the Cornhuskers lost five straight games and finished with a 4-5 season.

What Jones was rebuilding toward will never be known. World War II, which had broken out the year before, called to duty many of Nebraska's fine young men and eventually it laid out a new course of action for Major Biff Jones. He was called back to West Point as graduate manager of athletics, never to return to Nebraska.



Charles Winkler and Henry Waechter — a little "horse-play" with an O.U. shirt.



40 years later — 76,000 fans in a sea of red.

Chapter 9

The Search

While World War II often is credited for pulling the nation out of the Great Depression, it also can be blamed for ending the successes of Nebraska football. With its former coach and many prospective players doing their patriotic duty, football at Nebraska faded from the prominence of its former years.

When the war ended, the nation's universities were quick to capitalize on football as a way to reach the public. Nothing put a college on the map quicker than a winning football team. Nothing built a college team quicker than an active recruiting program. Colleges took their cue from Minnesota, Pittsburgh and Alabama. Nebraska had bucked the trend in the 1930's and championed the cause of amateurism by developing good teams without football scholarships. After the war, such a feat was impossible. When Nebraska was slow to react to the reality of college recruiting, it fell back in the pack. In the early 1940's, there were almost as many new coaches as players at the school, and it simply crushed the school's football program.

GLENN PRESNELL (3-7)

When Jones left, Nebraska officials gave the coaching job to an assistant, Glenn Presnell. He was known to most Nebraska fans as a great running back under Ernie Bearg in the 1920's.

But war had stripped the team of players assembled during Jones' last rebuilding year and Nebraska's 1942 team probably wasn't as good as its 3-7 record. The team only scored 55 points all season. Only because the Big Six was so war-weakened did Nebraska win any games, finishing a miraculous third. Outside the conference, Nebraska scored but a safety.

Before Presnell could do anything further at Nebraska, he was called off to war.

A.J. LEWANDOWSKI (4-12-0)

Another former Cornhusker star, Adolph Lewandowski, was the successor to Presnell. Actually, Lew might have been a good coach. He was a great organizer and held down about every job in the NU athletic department, except perhaps being

head of house detectives at the old Cornhusker Hotel.

But by 1943, the Nebraska team was simply one of boys too young to be drafted, those not physically fit to be drafted and those waiting to be drafted. Meanwhile, schools which became training centers for the army at such places at Purdue, Kansas, Wisconsin, Michigan and Illinois, were able to survive the war call to our nation's youth.

Probably the only break Lewandowski got during his two years at the helm was that war limited each college to eight games and the pre-cluded travel necessary to play powerful Pittsburgh. However, Nebraska could make it to Minnesota and got shelled 54-0. The Gophers looked like one of Rommel's Panzer divisions in the African desert.

In both 1943 and 1944, Nebraska put together 2-6 seasons and a couple of games, a win over Kansas in 1943 and one over Missouri the next year, were upsets.

By the end of the 1944 season, the austere Nebraska budget had Lewandowski acting as football coach, basketball coach, department business manager and acting athletic director. It was too much to do any job well. Lewandowski resigned his coaching posts at the end of the year to stabilize ticket sales which were sagging with Nebraska fortunes.

POTSY CLARK (6-13)

George "Potsy" Clark came from outside the Nebraska program and had a fine reputation for his football mind. In addition to coaching at several major colleges, the Illini alumnus had coached the Detroit Lions, the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Portsmouth Spartans in the pro ranks.

But at Nebraska he faced his toughest challenge. It was as though the school had never had a football program. In trying to rebuild the team in 1945, Clark went through some of the ordeal Jones had encountered in building his Rose Bowl team from scratch in 1938. Nebraska lost its first four games and then won the final five. Clark seemed to have turned the program around. But he only agreed to come to Nebraska as an interim coach during the war. When the war ended, Clark left.

Three years later, Nebraska again desperately went to Clark to pull the Cornhuskers out of their football misfortunes. In 1948, Clark came out of retirement, but that year the Cornhuskers were just 2-8.

BERNIE MASTERSON (5-13)

Nebraska, which had but two losing seasons in 50 years until the 1941 Rose Bowl, had now staggered through five of them. School officials decided an all-out effort had to be made to find the right man. One of the men under consideration was Biff Jones. Now that the war was over, he was again available. Many of the school officials wanted him back but, like Ernie Bearg, who almost coached Nebraska to a Rose Bowl, Jones had been a thorn in the side of some of the more influential Lincoln businessmen. They grudgingly decided it would be best to have Jones back but wanted his contract offer cut to one year. When the former Cornhusker coach received the offer, he burned whatever bridges remained between him and Lincoln.

When Nebraska turned to another available leader of note, they offered him a five-year contract and \$50,000 to be football coach and athletic director. He was Bernie Masterson, the former star in D.X. Bible's backfield, who had gone on to be the first top T-Formation quarterback in pro football under Stanford's George Shaughnessy and with George Halas of the Chicago Bears.

By this point in my life, I was farming quite heavily near my Ravenna home town and was among the many Nebraskans who rejoiced with the happy news that Cornhusker football was going to be rejoined by Bernie Masterson. He brought back my childhood memories on the family farm near Ravenna. I had followed the heroic triumphs of Bernie as a player. With Bernie at the helm, I was one of many who felt Nebraska football finally was returning to the big-time.

We Nebraskans, still living off the glory year of the Rose Bowl, realized that the T-Formation was the "cat's pajamas," as they said at the time. Masterson even brought his pro play book with 300 plays, all carefully devised to reach pay dirt, if executed properly. To make prospects brighter, Nebraska had its World War II veterans back in school. They included Tom Novak, Carl Samuelson, Sam Vacanti (with football experience at Purdue and Iowa Pre-Flight Schools), Jack Pesek, Mike DiBiasi, Dick Hutton and others.

But rebuilding a football program just wasn't as easy as it used to be. Masterson's T-Formation was good enough to handle some Big Six foes, whose fortunes were as low as the Cornhuskers', but outside the league, Nebraska was handled by Minnesota, Iowa, Indiana and UCLA. Nebraska finished 1946

with a 3-6 record. One of those wins was over Masterson's old teammate, George Sauer, when Nebraska upset highly-regarded Kansas 16-14.

Even though it was his first year, Masterson was heavily criticized. He had been expected to win with the team Clark had rebuilt the year before. When he failed to produce in 1947, winning just two of nine games, his contract was bought up by bitter boosters. He simply was thought of as a hero from another era. Others argued he would have won somewhere else, that bad blood had been spilled between some Nebraska rooters and Jones, and that Masterson was the scapegoat.

For whatever reasons, Masterson's sad experience as a Cornhusker coach is one of my few unhappy memories. It was not the proper ending for such a great player, at Nebraska and in pro football. Maybe his declining health contributed to his unsuccessful days as a coach at Nebraska. Hopefully, it wasn't the other way around. At the young age of 50, Masterson died in Chicago where he had been serving as a CYO director. Those close to him said he carried the anguish of his Nebraska coaching days with him until the day he died.



Tom "Train-wreck" Novak — one of the all-time threats.

Tom Novak

By 1947, the memories of a Rose Bowl were seven years old and fading. Since that time, Nebraska football fans had raised their hopes each autumn, only to have them dashed. The outcome of most games in each season was a crushing blow. As a popular television show jingle goes, "If it weren't for bad luck, they'd have no luck at all."

So when a former Omaha South High School player named Tom Novak took the field in 1947, he was a drink of water to thirsting fans. He first won the hearts of Nebraskans everywhere in the fourth game of his sophomore season, a 31-0 loss by Nebraska to Notre Dame. In a game in which Nebraska couldn't even score and at a position where fame is unfamiliar, center Tom Novak surfaced as the man who many call the best football player Nebraska has ever had.

Despite the lop-sided score, Novak leveled Irish ball carriers from his linebacker position on defense. He hit them with reckless abandon, never yielding. When the season was over that year, Notre Dame players voted Novak the greatest player they ever faced. Sports writers nicknamed him "Train Wreck." And while Nebraska football continued a futile struggle, Novak captured the imagination of the Cornhusker faithful. Oldtimers said Novak's performance against Notre Dame could only be compared to the great Ed Weir, who hit the Irish from the middle of the Nebraska line some 20 years earlier.

Ironically, Notre Dame's great coach, Frank Leahy, had desperately wanted Novak to play for the Fighting Irish. It was an opportunity that Old Train Wreck considered. But his high school coach, the late Cornie Collins, told Novak that if he went to South Bend, Ind., he would be cheating his parents out of the opportunity to watch him play. That is the only urging Novak needed to stay home. Whatever he did on and off the football field was for others. His parents watched him play every game at Memorial Stadium, Tom later told me.

Before the 1947 season even started, Novak went to the coaching staff and asked Bernie Masterson if he couldn't be moved from fullback to center. He said he knew he wasn't fast enough to be a ball carrier and this way he could still play linebacker on defense. The unselfish request was granted.

He took a position where he should have been lost in the crowd. But opposing players, sports writers and the fans quickly noticed the best player on the field for three years. Former

Nebraska great, George Sauer, then coaching at Kansas, complained to teammate Masterson, "Tom is just too tough for college football and he ought to be barred." Bernie laughed and said, "Yes, he's just too tough for your boys."

One of the greatest tributes to Train Wreck was written by Norrie Anderson, then sports editor of the Lincoln Star. Anderson, who now writes a column, "Football Confidential," for Football News, noted,

"Tom gave body, soul and unquenchable spirit. Victory or defeat, there was Novak, ever fierce, ever determined, savagely throwing that 205-pound sturdy body into play after play. His battering sometimes took your breath away.

"He played under three different coaches, three different systems. It made no difference; Tom wanted to play. There was hardly a game that didn't find him utterly exhausted at the end. Sometimes he'd be so dazed a teammate would have to show him the way off the field. And in the dressing room you could just see the toll — face cut, body, a mass of bruises. He would just sit. After a defeat, he'd always say, 'Wait'll next year;' after a victory a huge grin would spread over that muffin face."

That was the mark of this great man — one of the best college football ever produced. Until Outland Trophy winner Rich Glover and Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Rodgers, only one Cornhusker jersey had ever been retired. It belonged to Tom Novak.

In each of the years he played, he was all conference. In his senior year in 1949, he was named All-American. If I would be asked to pick an All-Star team of great Cornhuskers, he would be the first man I would choose. I would choose him captain and take it from there. He epitomized what Nebraska football is all about. If any team had 11 players who hit as hard and played with such a vengeance as Tom Novak, the game would have to be abolished. There would be no one left to play.

Under Masterson, Novak and the Cornhuskers finished 2-7. Under returning coach, Potsy Clark, they were 2-8. Under Bill Glassford in 1949, senior Novak and teammates were 4-5. If it weren't for Tom Novak, those years would be just three more losing seasons. But the spirit of old Train Wreck did as much as anything to pull Nebraska football players from their losing ways.

The emotional turnabout culminated in the final game of 1949, Tom's senior year. It was a touching moment at Memorial Stadium that few are likely to forget. Special honors were prepared for Train Wreck at the half. The Nebraska band spelled out the letters "T-O-M" and the entire crowd, including visiting Colorado fans, stood to pay homage to the great football star.

Everyone was filled with emotion, including myself. If I would have had to speak, I would have choked. An elderly woman near me sobbed openly. She grabbed my arm and cried, "I don't care what they say, they ought to let Tommy play one more year." For once, I was at a loss of words. I simply put my arm around the sweet woman and said, "Bless your heart."

In all great sports communities, there are emotional good-byes from adoring fans to their great athletes. In Yankee Stadium they said good-bye to Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig. This was Nebraska's greatest good-bye. No other Nebraska athlete has been so needed and so close to his fans. Novak just accepted the emotional farewell with his boyish grin. Train Wreck said his good-byes on the playing field. He led Nebraska to a 25-14 upset of Colorado that afternoon.

Tom played football for others just as he lived for others. When the opportunity to play pro football came, Tom decided he couldn't play for money. Instead he went into private business. Then in 1976, tragedy struck Train Wreck. The man who had laughed at injuries on the field was paralyzed in a freak fall down a flight of stairs. One of the most magnificent physical specimens ever created was lying in an Omaha hospital. There, as always, he was fighting hard. I remember visiting with Tom when I too was in the same hospital, scheduled for eye surgery on a stuck tear duct. I was consumed by what the pain might be like. While others would be bitter from such a crushing blow in life, Tom was busy giving me courage by saying "It will only hurt when you laugh, Wink."

Second Time Around

The famous song, "The Second Time Around," may have been written for the romance of Joe DiMaggio and the late Marilyn Monroe, but it also could have been written for the University of Nebraska and Patsy Clark. When Nebraska alumni bought up Masterson's contract, they asked for Patsy to come back.

Patsy hinted he had a couple of wrinkles he still thought he could add to the South Platte spread, a football formation he brought to Nebraska during his first year. But it was not a sound formation. Cletus Fischer, the oldest brother in the famous St. Edward, Neb., family, had the questionable privilege of running for his life from the unsuccessful formation and those who watched him say he never lacked for courage. Cletus

survived and admitted he felt like a Kamakaze pilot running from this offense.

When Cletus wore out, Potsy put in brother Ken, who just shakes his head when the ill-fated North and South Platte River Spread Formation is mentioned. Cletus went on to have a fine professional career with the New York Giants and is now the offensive line coach for Nebraska under Tom Osborne.



Cletus Fischer — "If he was playing today, he'd be a two year All-American."

Clark's team finished that year with a 2-8 record and likeable Potsy joked, "This isn't my kind of team." He kept thinking he was seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, but it always turned out to be another oncoming train ready to meet him head-on.

Football triumphs seemed to never come. There was no hope for a better day. As my old spinster, aunt, who never got a date, used to say, "The future seems so far away."

At the end of the 1948 season, Potsy decided if he couldn't head Nebraska out of the mire, he would find somebody who could. He kicked himself upstairs as athletic director and went looking for a new football coach.

Chapter 10

The Storm

Bill Glassford's Nebraska football teams were like the girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead. When they were good, they were very, very good. And when they were bad, they were very, very bad. Potsy Clark found the controversial Glassford at the University of New Hampshire. He had played for the Pittsburgh coach, the great Jock Sutherland, and was cut from the same cloth. Glassford wasn't young to be a football coach, but his babyface made him look younger.

One thing Glassford brought to Nebraska for the first time was full-scale recruiting. It was an axiom Pittsburgh had known for two decades. You can't win unless you have the best players. Glassford laid that on the line to his new boss. Potsy seemed as surprised as the man who hadn't kissed his wife in 20 years and shot the guy who did. Clark had expected Glassford to play mostly with Nebraska boys. Glassford promptly told Clark that he was traveling east to Pennsylvania to recruit some easterners.



Don Strasheim, Coach Bill Glassford and Bob Reynolds at their 30 year team reunion.

Bobby Reynolds

Glassford's first trip however was a 100-mile trip west of Lincoln to recruit one Nebraska blue-chipper. He traveled to Grand Island Senior High to meet Bobby Reynolds, the high school athlete who looked like all football heroes should look. He had blond hair in an All-American crewcut and a handsome, flashy smile. He was as good as he looked, too. He had led the Grand Island high school team to state championships in football and basketball.

As a central Nebraska farmer and livestock raiser, I spent my fall Friday evenings watching Reynolds play football, and he is the best high school athlete I ever saw. He showed remarkable poise at an early age and clearly was his team's leader both in football and in basketball. He was best running in the open field and, if he was ever tackled in the open field, it's only because the defender guessed wrong.



Bobby Reynolds — "Break-away-Bobby."

One of the things I first remember about Bobby Reynolds playing at Nebraska was that first fall. The whole state already was watching this freshman progress in 1949 while senior Tom Novak was leading Glassford's first Nebraska varsity team to a respectable 4-5 season. When the first freshman team was announced, Reynolds was listed on the No. 1 defensive unit. A scream came out of Grand Island that could be heard all over the Midwest. Poor Ike Hanscom, the freshman coach, felt like the Hunchback of Notre Dame on Easter Sunday from hearing so many bells. Everyone who called agreed Reynolds could play defense. But didn't Ike know he could play offense? Didn't Ike know about Bobby's sixth-sense as a runner, a sense no coach can teach and only a very few are born with? Ike politely told the callers that the arrangement was just temporary as the Grand Island ace was nursing an injured leg, and then considered whether or not to get an unlisted number. Coach Hanscom, a real good friend of mine, said he learned nobody is perfect and I was the perfect example.

Nebraska football fans also got nervous when rumors began floating about professional baseball bonus offers to Reynolds, who didn't look or play all that much different from Mickey Mantle. Central Nebraskans had watched Bobby play Legion baseball and in the Iowa and Nebraska Semi-Pro circuits. He was as much a local hero at Storm Lake, Iowa where he played ball one summer, as he was in Grand Island.

Reynolds never took the bonus offers, and in 1950 he led Nebraska to a 6-2-1 season, the first Cornhusker winning season in 10 years. As a sophomore and only 19 years old, Reynolds delivered everything expected of him and more. In his opening game, Reynolds rushed for 187 yards and scored all his team's points in a 20-20 tie with Indiana. Reynolds plunged over from the two for the first score of the season and then added runs of 10 and 45 yards. Both were broken field runs, a Bobby Reynolds specialty. He would give a leg and take it away. He would follow his blocking until it broke down and then strike out on his own. He would leave a trail behind of strewn players in opposing jerseys. Players couldn't tackle Reynolds in the open field. They couldn't even touch him.

Following the Indiana tie, Reynolds scored two touchdowns and rushed for 161 yards as Nebraska beat Minnesota 32-26 in Minneapolis. It was the first time Nebraska had won in Minneapolis since 1902. Though touching the ball just 17 times,

Bobby scored on a designed five-yard sweep and later on a 67-yard Reynolds special.

In game three, Bobby rolled up 145 yards on just 14 carries and scored all 19 points in a losing cause against Colorado. Bill Schaffer, a former Ravenna school teacher, and I drove the entire night to Boulder to watch the game. It was a dry and hot afternoon and the Rocky Mountains provided the background for "Breakaway Bobby." One thrilling run was for 80 yards. After carving a winding trail through Buff players, Reynolds had only one defender to beat. They dashed toward the end zone side-by-side, and Reynolds had his head bowed like a Bronco coming out of a chute with the tackler in pursuit. When the defender made his dive, Reynolds gave him a hip and then took it away. The tackler grabbed nothing but air and Reynolds danced in for the score.

When Nebraska returned home for the Penn State game, Memorial Stadium was filled by those who had read of his dazzling efforts and wanted to see him in person. He rewarded them with 186 yards on 24 carries and scored all 19 points in the shutout. At Kansas, Reynolds sparked a 33-26 win, gaining 156 yards, though only scoring nine of the points. But against Missouri he collected 175 yards and scored three touchdowns on 25 rushes, totaling 22 points in the 40-34 win. Against Kansas State, Reynolds gained 141 yards on 15 carries and playing Iowa State, he added 109 yards on 26 tries. In eight games, he had averaged 100 or more yards and already was on his way to setting a conference scoring record. Those are only the statistics.

One of his touchdowns in the Missouri upset was with a pass he wrestled away from two Tiger defenders on a throw from quarterback Fran Nagle. Later in the dressing room, he told reporters how a Missouri defender had hit the ball with the back of his palm and "I just picked the ball out of his grasp and came down with it."

Late in the game, Missouri was leading though Nebraska had the football at the Tiger 33. It was fourth down with six minutes to go and Reynolds was pitched the football, a surprise to nobody in the stadium. Missouri defenders quickly trapped Reynolds behind the line of scrimmage, but he reversed his field, dipping as far back as the Nebraska 40. From there, he set up defenders with head fakes and hip swivels and found friendly blocks along the way. It went in the scorebooks as a 33-yard

run but Reynolds easily covered 100 yards, 30 backwards, 60 forward and who knows how many, sideways.

Out of this run came one of the greatest all-time stories of Nebraska football folklore. As it has been retold, tackle Charlie Toogood of the Cornhuskers was lying across a Missouri defender, who had been the recipient of a timely block during Reynolds' makeshift touchdown run. The Missouri defender became irritated when Toogood didn't immediately get off him and protested: "Let me up, the play's over!" The quick-witted Toogood replied, "Not necessarily, knowing Bobby, he just might be coming back this way again!"

I recall that, from the stands, I flinched and twitched with every muscle in my body to match the effort Reynolds was giving on the field. When Reynolds turned, so did I, according to Husker fans who were nearby at the time. Each time he escaped a tackler, I leapt up and down. And each time I jumped up and down, a pair of field glasses hanging from my neck pounded on the head of the poor woman standing in front of me. Luckily, the couple in front of me happened to be close friends, John and Vivian Maxwell of Ashland. Vivian admitted to having a headache, but when I profusely apologized, she laughed, "If Bobby makes another run like that, feel free to do it again."



Vivian and John Maxwell still smiling 31 years later. She admits she finally got over her headache.

The weeks that followed provided a dream world for any Nebraska lad. Bobby dependably provided football heroics that only happen in the motion pictures. Reynolds was so remarkable that year because so much was expected of him and he always lived up to those expectations.

But when mighty Oklahoma prepared to host the Cornhuskers in the final game of the season, even the most faithful of fans flinched. In 1947, Bud Wilkinson had taken the reins at Oklahoma and led the Sooners to a share of the Big Six title. In 1948, the Big Six became the Big Seven and the Sooners won a second of 13 straight titles under Wilkinson. By 1949, Wilkinson had built such an awesome reputation that the Sooners became known as Oklahoma and the Six Dwarfs.

Before the game started, Wilkinson told his players, "We may slow Reynolds down, but we'll never stop him." He was right. Even awesome Oklahoma, one of the finest defensive teams in the country, couldn't stop the Grand Islander. Even though the Sooners were able to use ball control to limit his number of running opportunities and though they knew Reynolds would be receiving the ball whenever possible, they didn't stop him. Reynolds had 24 carries although Oklahoma did limit him to 84 yards. The only way the Sooners were able to beat Nebraska that day was to outscore the Cornhuskers in a 49-35 win.

One of the more memorable plays by Reynolds in the game started as most of his great runs usually did, behind the line of scrimmage. Bobby was trapped for a loss and after whirling free and reversing his field, he found enough room to get off a running punt. The ball traveled over the head of Sooner safety Eddie Crowder. Now the Colorado athletic director, Crowder fumbled while trying to field the punt over his head, and Nebraska kept in the game by recovering the football deep in Sooner territory. Later, as Colorado football coach, Eddie encountered similar misfortunes when playing Nebraska which is why I always call him my favorite opposing coach.

Nobody ever could have dreamed the season that Bobby Reynolds had in 1950. He finished the season with 22 touchdowns, a record 157 points and gained 1,342 yards on 193 carries. Nobody ever gained that many yards in the Big Seven and his record stood until Heisman Trophy winner Steve Owens of Oklahoma gained 1,536 yards in 1968. He made all of

the All-America teams and Cornhusker fans replayed his efforts all winter. They looked forward to a new era of Nebraska football, led by a boyish Nebraskan, who played as good as he looked.

But fortune, which had been so kind to Bobby all his life, turned on him in 1951. Glassford was having the final of his famous pre-season scrimmages in western Nebraska in 1951 when Reynolds separated his shoulder. Glassford each year took his Cornhuskers to the Agriculture School at Curtis to keep his players away from distractions. Very few saw the scrimmage that day, so not many knew how bad the injury really was.

Reynolds took the blame for the injury. "The Master of the Clutch," as Lincoln Star sportswriter Norrie Anderson called him, told the press, "I was in baseball shape — not football shape — which means my shoulders were not ready for the hard pounding of football."

That fateful September Saturday, I was with my wife visiting her parents in Kearney. To hear a sport report on the scrimmage I had gone out to my car to pick up an eastern Nebraska radio station. The startling news of Reynolds' injury hit me like a ton of bricks. When I stumbled back to the house my wife said I looked like a man who just watched his Cadillac roll off a cliff with only two payments still due.

The injury kept Reynolds out of the first three games of the season. With Reynolds on the sidelines, the Cornhuskers had no scoring punch. The year before, Nebraska simply had outscored opponents en route to a winning season. In the first three weeks Nebraska won only a game over Kansas State by forfeit. The Cornhuskers were held to a touchdown in each of the losses. Against Minnesota, Reynolds was barely healed. My wife and I traveled with Leo Kelso and his better half of Holdrège to watch Bobby's return. Bobby still was trying to get back his intensity and without his effectiveness, Nebraska took a 39-20 loss.

Reynolds seemed to spend the year catching up to the intensity of play as Nebraska's football fortunes did a complete turnabout from the year before. Finally, in the final game of the season, Reynolds looked as though he was back to his great form as Nebraska traveled to play Miami. "Breakaway Bobby" rushed for 151 yards on 26 carries though Miami won 19-7.

The late O.A. "Buck" Beltzer, for whom Nebraska's baseball field is named, called Bobby's performance in that

game one of the best he ever saw. Mr. Beltzer, who was one of the class gentlemen I have ever known, was a former captain of the 1909 team, and was considered by everyone that knew him as one of the Huskers' finest boosters, so this was not a tribute to be taken lightly. In that game, Reynolds had played like the All-American he was, in spite of a painful lime burn to a cornea he received in the Colorado game two weeks before. However being able to only see out of one eye did not curtail his magnificent performance.

For Nebraska the season was shattering and the Cornhuskers finished 2-8, one win by forfeit.

In 1952, hopes again were high for Nebraska fans. Reynolds still had his senior year and he had the entire summer to recuperate from his junior jinx year. For the first three games of the season, Reynolds appeared to be coming back. He played well enough as Nebraska blitzed South Dakota, Oregon and Iowa State. Then in game four, as Nebraska was beating Kansas State 27-14 in Memorial Stadium, Reynolds was injured again — another shoulder separation. Reynolds lay on the ground and then walked from the field to talk with Glassford and the trainers. Every eye, many moist, was fixed on the sideline, hoping against hope. After a few moments, Glassford kicked a sideline marker and there no longer was any doubt. Bobby was hurt again. He was taken from the field to the training room where x-rays confirmed what everyone knew. He was held out for two games, and though still hurt, tried to play in the final four. But the injury took away Reynolds' concentration and intensity. Instead of challenging tacklers, Reynolds was forced to protect his shoulder. It was one of my greatest disappointments in sports.



Jerry Minnick —
"The Cambridge Crusher."

After a 4-0 start, Nebraska finished the season with a 5-4-1 record. All-American tackle Jerry Minnick gave Nebraska another player with national recognition that season, but the winter of 1952 was spent second-guessing the coaching techniques of Bill Glassford.

Lost in the shuffle of the disappointing finish to the season was the tremendous play of quarterback Fran Nagle. When Glassford accepted the Nebraska coaching post he had brought Nagle with him from Massachusetts as a junior college transfer. He was a great master of the T-Formation and an excellent passer, and he was unparalleled with his deft handling of the football. No quarterback has ever faded back with the ball on hip quite like Nagle. I was like many of the fans who felt Fran made our high geared offense go with great fakes and if he was playing today he would be a super-star even though he wasn't a runner.

The Pittsburgh tough guy Bill Glassford had severe training rules which were well known. His training camps at Curtis were legendary for their toughness and initially accepted when Glassford had Nebraska's first winning season in a decade in 1950. He had devised a locker room at Curtis that had only one entrance, which would have made Coach Francis Allen's National Championship Gymnastic Team flinch to get into the dressing room. One of his former players says he still thinks of Glassford every time he sneezes. The course made the Death March of Bataan seem like a Sunday School picnic. Players outraged by Glassford's demands were leaving camp on a daily basis.

By 1953, morale was at a low on the team. Quarterback Johnny Bordogna had managed some magical tricks in passing to bring Nebraska to a 3-6-1 record, but Nebraska alumni were not impressed.

Those who quit the squad that season read like the All-State team of Nebraska high schoolers just a few years before.

At the time, I was writing a sports column for the Ravenna News called "Wink at Sports" and though I was in a small community, I was besieged with letters and complaints from Nebraska football fans. There was an open call for Glassford's dismissal. Thirty-five players drew up a petition, took it to University of Nebraska Chancellor John Selleck and asked for Glassford's dismissal.

But in 1950, when Glassford's arrival on the scene had been a welcome one, he had signed a five-year contract with Nebraska. After Reynolds' great year, Pittsburgh and Minnesota had offered coaching jobs to Glassford. Nebraska had countered with an extended contract and it was that pact that saved his job.

Selleck did take the petition to Glassford and asked him to resign. But after checking with his attorney, Glassford refused and told Nebraska officials that he had signed on to coach until 1955. Glassford was shaken by the player rebellion, however. He met with the players and listened to their grievances. Some things were settled. Other weren't. But the crisis had been reduced to an uneasy truce. Some players said they came away from the meeting with a fresh outlook on Glassford. One player said he never had a better coach or friend than after the stormy affair.

In later years, some former Nebraska players still agreed with the petition they signed against Glassford. If there hadn't been a meeting, there might not have been a team in 1954, the players said.

Yet 1954 was Glassford's best effort at Nebraska. He had a better record in 1950, but much of that was because of the talent of Bobby Reynolds. This time there really weren't many players of note. Only three Cornhuskers made the All Big Seven Conference team in 1954. Don Glantz and Charles Bryant were the team's top linemen, while Bob Smith and Rex Fischer, another in the line of the Fischer brothers, were the backs. It was a tough year for Glassford, too. He was openly criticized. As a lame-duck coach, his authority continued to be openly challenged. Yet that year he led Nebraska to the Orange Bowl and its first appearance on national television.

Oklahoma, beating Nebraska 55-7, won its ninth straight Big Seven conference title that year. But the Sooners were making so many trips to Florida that the Orange Bowl Committee worked out an agreement with the Big Seven that no conference team could appear in the bowl in consecutive years. Since the Sooners were ineligible, the second-place Cornhuskers were invited to play Duke.

Other Nebraska losses that year were to Minnesota and Pittsburgh, a couple of familiar foes, and Kansas State. The Cornhuskers traveled to the Orange Bowl with a 3-2 conference record and a 6-4 overall mark, including wins over Oregon State

and Hawaii. The key win in the season had been a 25-19 win over Missouri.

There wasn't nearly as much excitement generated in Nebraska's second bowl trip. The whole controversy over Glassford the winter before had kept the regular season subdued. Also that season, Nebraska started its tradition of trying to schedule games at Hawaii, and the Cornhuskers weren't quite as wide-eyed about the following trip to Miami. Glassford reportedly had trouble enforcing his training rules for both trips and there was talk of curfew violations in Miami.

Duke was a bonafide top national team that year and the Cornhuskers were simply manhandled during the game, 34-7.

By the end of the season, Glassford was openly being criticized in the press, particularly by Don Bryant, then sports editor of the Lincoln Star, and Dick Becker, then with the Lincoln Journal. Former World-Herald sports editor Wally Provost recalls the story of the running feud the best. That fall both Bryant, the replacement for Norrie Anderson who left to become publicity director of the Orange Bowl, and Becker were second-guessing Glassford's preparation for the fall scrimmage. Glassford was angry and called the sports scribes the "Bobsey Twins." He brought out two uniforms and invited the sports writers to suit up since they knew so much about football. Both writers diplomatically declined the chance to play on the grounds that they were ineligible.

Actually, Bryant was a topnotch center in his playing days and can still snap the football with the best of them. With a smile on his face, he always says, "Wink, it's just like milking a cow — if you ever can do it, you never lose it." There was a game played against Oregon in 1953 in which Bryant, known as the "Fat Fox", could have been used. Three different Nebraska centers were guilty of bad snaps over the punter's head in that game. Glassford likely would have been willing to pull out a uniform for Foxie that day. But instead of recycling to become a Cornhusker, the Fox left the Lincoln Star to become sports information director at the University of Nebraska and has won several national awards for his football guides. Becker is now the publicity chairman for Ak-Sar-Ben in Omaha, which provides so many service projects to the state.

Glassford's team didn't drop off that much in 1955, and he didn't coach it much differently. Again, the Cornhuskers were second in the Big Seven, this time with a 4-1 mark. Again,



Don Bryant — “Eat your heart out John Travolta.”

the defeats were to teams outside the conference and Nebraska gave Ohio State a good scare in Buckeye country before losing 28-20. Even though Glassford's coaching results were the same that season, his luck had completely changed. This year there was no Orange Bowl for the Cornhuskers because conference champion Oklahoma was eligible to go. Another problem was that Nebraska opened the 1955 season with its most humiliating defeat in some time, a 6-0 loss at Memorial Stadium to Hawaii. Nebraska had clobbered the Rainbows 50-0 in Honolulu the year before. From that point on, fans were no longer willing to tolerate the controversial Glassford. After the fifth game of the season, Nebraska was 1-4, but Glassford determinedly led the Cornhuskers to four straight conference wins.

After the final home game, a 37-20 win over Colorado, Glassford announced his resignation. He still had the option to renew his contract but said in the book, *Go Big Red*, “I feel like I've been reborn — I feel wonderful,” Glassford said about resigning. “I'll tell you one thing about my seven years at Nebraska; I've certainly become a philosopher.”

Chapter 11

Nebraska A.D. (Afore Devaney)

At the end of the 1955 season, Nebraska school officials started the search once again. They were looking for the 21st coach in the school's history. Of that number, only four coaches — Fred Dawson, Ernie Bearg, Dana Bible and Biff Jones — had been at the helm during the glory years of 1921-1940. During the next 15 years, Nebraska had gone through six coaches and one of those had been used twice. There would have even more coaches if the school hadn't signed a five-year contract with Bill Glassford in 1950.

PETE ELLIOTT (4-6)

Using the philosophy of "If you can't beat them, join them," Nebraska school officials went to the University of Oklahoma and found a 29-year-old whiz kid named Pete Elliott. With his golden hair, soft-spoken voice and gentle mannerisms, Elliott came to the school looking just a little like Robert Redford. He had impressed Bud Wilkinson, and Nebraska school officials thought they had a sure thing. But Elliott stayed at Oklahoma to help see the Sooners to the Orange Bowl and was off to a late start at Nebraska. Nevertheless, he took a green Nebraska football team and led it to a 3-3 conference mark and 4-6 seasonal record in 1956. The only punishing loss delivered to Nebraska was a 54-6 season-ender by Oklahoma.

The Nebraska Board or Regents was satisfied and offered Elliott a raise from \$12,000 to \$14,500. But the University of California was one of several other colleges also with an eye on Elliott and made him another offer. One month after he accepted the Nebraska raise, Elliott took off for greener pastures. So, suddenly, Nebraska was looking for its eighth coach in 16 years.

BILL JENNINGS (15-34-1)

Elliott left Nebraska with few options when he departed so quickly, and the Regents offered the coaching job to 38-year-old assistant Bill Jennings. In his first year at Nebraska, Jennings had assisted Elliott very well and had been a superb recruiter.

He had a fine fatherly image and few questioned his knowledge of football. At least with Jennings, Nebraska officials hoped the transition would be less traumatic.

However, it's a big step from assistant to head coach. Jennings was a great scout, tactician and counselor, but a head coach must also be a great leader. As a leader, Jennings never won the following of the Nebraska faithful. Some said he was too conservative. Others said he tightened in the clutch. Jennings could never prove the critics wrong. In five years, he never had a winning season.

Jennings did do one thing well. He could recruit. Nebraska was never at a loss for talented players with Jennings at the helm. He raided Minnesota so often that Twin City sports writers demanded a rule be passed to end out-of-state recruiting.

But promising talent did Jennings little good in his first year. In 1957 Nebraska fell to 1-9, the worst record in the school's history. Even in 1890, when Nebraska played just two games, it won them both. In 1891, playing four games, Nebraska had finished 2-2. It was hardly a way to instill a following from Nebraska fans, so desperate for a winning season. It was during this season, that a disgruntled alumnus went up to talk to Jennings, known for his factual recall of anything pertaining to football and the University of Nebraska. The alumnus put his arm around Jennings and asked in a curious manner:

"Coach, how many students do we have on the University of Nebraska campus?"

Bill, being a "figure filbert," quickly replied, "12,283."

Then the alumnus remarked, "That's wonderful. Now do you suppose it would be possible to get just one of them in front of the darned ball carrier next Saturday?"

By 1958, Nebraska was considered the underdog in every game it played. But Jennings always managed an upset of a powerhouse team each year. It probably added fuel to the fire that eventually engulfed his coaching career at Nebraska. Fans would raise their hopes when Nebraska would play well in an underdog role and then become frustrated when the Cornhuskers were upended themselves. Nebraska was a very mediocre 3-7 in 1958, but that season the Cornhuskers upset Penn State 14-7 and Pittsburgh 14-6.

That Pittsburgh game was the last home Nebraska game I have ever missed seeing since becoming a Big Red regular. That

day I was a victim of the flu. I remember listening to Lyell Bremser bellowing out of a nearby radio as Larry Naviaux, the Lexington southpaw, and Pat Fischer hooked up in a passing exhibition from their halfback positions to pull off the win. Each time Lyell would scream out, "Man, woman and child," I would flinch in the bed, thinking I was going to pass on to that Great Gridiron in the Sky.

In 1960, Nebraska opened in Austin with a 14-13 upset win over Texas. But the bright start to the season didn't carry the Cornhuskers any further, and they finished 4-6, the same record which Nebraska had managed in 1959.

The Texas win was the happy finish to a frustrating Saturday evening for a friend of mine that fall. Jim Beltzer of the Grand Island Trust Co., my former employer, was flying his own plane to the game with friends but had been detained for a couple of hours by a Kansas thunderstorm. So arriving a little late at the Austin airport, the Savings and Loan magnate jokes about this landing at the Texas airport, as he admits it was his first night landing. He recalls bouncing the plane down the runway with the grace of a George Brett bouncer to the infield. After a few moments of silent prayers Beltzer's group quickly hailed a cab and made a wild ride to the stadium. The cabbie was to receive extra tip money for maneuvering through the traffic, somewhat in the fashion of Bobby Reynolds, and to keep his radio tuned to the football game. Despite some near tackles from oncoming traffic, the late-arriving Nebraskans made it to the stadium only in time to hear over the radio that Texas had taken the opening kickoff and easily marched down the field for a score. Beltzer thought about the weather — threatening plane ride and the wild cab ride as he counted out a sizeable tip for the cab driver. "I guess all the fools aren't dead yet," Beltzer said.

Nebraska fullback Bill "Thunder" Thornton joined with Bernie Clay and Clay White and the scrambling antics of quarterback Pat Fischer to make Beltzer's journey south worth risking his life for, as the Cornhuskers emerged 14-13 winners.

The Greatest Upset

The greatest upset by a Nebraska football team was a year earlier in 1959. By that time, Cornhusker fans were used to about anything from Jennings. In the opening game of that

season he drove the officials and the Texas U. coach, Darrell Royal scurrying for the rule book when he used two quarterbacks in his famous "Two under the center formation". While the referee decided it was illegal it gave the Nebraska home fans something to talk about that week in spite of a 20-0 defeat at the hands of the Longhorns.

In 1959, there were three sure things in life for Nebraskans: death, taxes and the Oklahoma Sooners. They were all things Nebraskans feared. Most of all, they feared Oklahoma. That year Bud Wilkinson was taking the Sooners to their 13th straight league title (The conference became the Big Eight with the addition of Oklahoma State in 1958). The Sooners were unbeaten in 74 straight games.

Nebraska hadn't beaten an Oklahoma team since the war year of 1942. In Glassford's final two years, Oklahoma punished Nebraska 55-7 and 41-0. Pete Elliott lost to his former mentor Bud Wilkinson 54-6 while at the helm in 1956. In his first two tries, Jennings had been turned back 32-7 in Lincoln and 40-7 in Norman. The last time Oklahoma had ever lost a conference game was in 1946, some 13 years before. Fans figured Nebraska had about as much a chance against Oklahoma as the coyote in a Road Runner cartoon.

Nebraska entered the game with a meek 2-4 record, and I remember trying to give tickets away to friends just to help increase the turnout of fans for the game. In our loan office, I approached friends Woody Woodyard and Charlie Gallagher. They declined gracefully, saying that they were timid fellows and cried rather easily. They joshed and said they couldn't bear watching slaughters.

When I tried to give two tickets to Al Eversoll, the father of some of the finest athletes Grand Island has ever produced, including Bob, the insurance magnate, he was candid with me when he sadly remarked, "Wink, I believe you are the proverbial born loser. I can see what you mean when you tell the story about why you have had a sad life and that when you were seven years old your daddy took you aside and then left you there."

Instead of taking friends to watch the fracas, I did the next best thing. I took my seven-year-old son, Chuck. But first I had to make him a promise. I told him I would leave with him at the fourth quarter, partly not to discourage him about Nebraska football, but also to return him back to Grand Island to go

trick-or-treating. It was Halloween, but the Sooners didn't need any masks.

Surprisingly, 34,000 die-hard fans showed up for the contest, and just as odd, there seemed to be a sense of excitement about the game, sort of a feeling of upset. And as the afternoon wore on, the intensity of play increased and the excitement of the crowd developed into a hysteria. Oklahoma was unable to blow out the Cornhuskers. Nebraska wasn't strong enough to control the momentum of the game, but as the game wore on, the unbelievable seemed possible. Also hard to believe was the fact the crowd grew larger as the game went along as Lincolmites left their home to see this hotly contested game.



Don Fricke — "A two way player."

Almost on every play, a new Nebraska player became a hero. Harry Tolly, Lee Zentic, Don Fricke, Don Olson, Pat Clare and Ron Meade were among them. Quarterback Pat Fischer was playing the game of his life with his great quickness, a trait that would amaze pro football fans in St. Louis and Washington during his later years. But Oklahoma kept coming right at the Cornhuskers, challenging them to do more. My life, no doubt, was made 10 years shorter, by watching Oklahoma's quarterback, the gifted Bobby Boyd, running around behind the line of scrimmage and then at the last second flipping passes to wide open receivers. But Nebraska's secondary never played harder. Don Olson, a Grand Island All Big Eight defensive lineman, could be seen hawking Boyd from sideline-to-sideline. Boyd was much fleeter afoot but Olson kept after him doggedly. The game was like a roller-coaster ride. Nobody knew how it would end or where it would stop.

With nine minutes remaining, I felt a distracting tug on my shirtsleeve, now wringing wet with sweat from my anxiety. "Come on Daddy, we got to go." I quickly asked why, with both of my eyes fixed on the field of play. "You promised me we'd leave and go home and trick-or-treat," Chuck reminded me. I told him to stay calm and have another soft drink. Needless to say, I felt bad about breaking such a promise, but I couldn't have left at gunpoint. It would have taken a stretcher to get me out, and I wasn't too sure my exit wasn't going to be that way.

However, as the game reached its climactic finish, even my seven-year-old son was completely wrapped up in the outcome. Oklahoma had a 21-19 advantage, but Ron Meade, now a prominent Grand Island banker, used his educated toe to bang through two late field goals to put Nebraska out front, first by a point, and then by a score of 25-21. The first field goal brought screams in Memorial Stadium to crescendo and the second one brought forth screams from throats that were hoarse. Desperately, Oklahoma tried to move the ball downfield in the final moments, but the Cornhusker defenders fiercely held on for the win.

That night, some time near 10 p.m., I took my tuckered son trick-or-treating. For him it was a rough Halloween, for at every stop people wanted to know how it had happened. How had Nebraska ever beaten Oklahoma?

True to form, Nebraska journeyed to Iowa State the next

week and promptly lost to the team known as the "Dirty Thirty" for their determined play despite a fewness in numbers. In a more anticlimactic upset, Nebraska nudged Colorado, 14-12, but then in turn lost the next week to a very bad Kansas State team.

Kansas State had mustered no offense all season but the Saturday the Cornhuskers walked into their den, it was a different matter. Clarence Mitchell, the Lincoln insurance tycoon who lived in Grand Island at the time, had journeyed to my house to listen to the game. "Mitch," one of the great fans, sat back with me and waited for the Cornhusker romp. But the only romping was Clarence and me in the living room, climbing over the furniture and jumping up and down. Desperately, we tried to get the Nebraska offense moving and to stop the defense from moving the wrong way.

When it was clear this wasn't going to be the Cornhuskers' day, Mitch and I jumped into his car, hoping to change their luck. But on the car radio, the game went from bad to worse. As we motored aimlessly, we found ourselves on the southside of Grand Island, near the cemetery. We pulled on in and parked the car to hear the gloomy finish and found ourselves looking at nothing but rows of tombstones as the announcer gave the final score, a 29-14 Kansas State win.

The story of our automobile ride made it into several of the state's newspaper and a headline in the Omaha World-Herald read, "G.I. fans drive to cemetery to cheer up." We received quite a bit of razzing about the story from our friends. In fact, the story got so far out of hand, that we had to deny that when we drove out of the cemetery, we were being chased by several grave diggers with shovels, as we certainly looked like "warmed over death".

In 1960, Nebraska started and ended its season with an upset. Texas was the victim in the opener and in the final game of the season, Nebraska again beat Oklahoma, 17-14, this time in Norman. The 1961 season was little different. Nebraska showed promise all season but lost three games by a touchdown to finish 3-6-1. Jennings had developed such players at Pat Fischer, Ron McDole, Mick Tingelhoff and Thunder Thornton. He also recruited Kent McCloughan, the "Broken Bow Bullet," though failing to gain Gale Sayers. Ironically, Jennings later helped tutor Sayers to greatness as a Kansas assistant coach.

The entire recruiting year in 1960 for Nebraska is one of

what might have been. Jennings' days at Nebraska were already running out. In addition to McCloughan and Sayers, a running back named Bobby Williams from Lincoln High also was available for recruiting. They were three of the best college prospects in the nation that year. McCloughan was said by north Central Nebraskans to be better than Choppy Rhoades, another Custer County Cornhusker from earlier days. Williams was thought to be the best of the three until he appeared in the same backfield with Sayers in the high school Shrine game later that year. By then, there was no doubt who was the best in the trio and unfortunately for Nebraskans, he was headed for Kansas. Coach Jack Mitchell and other Kansas alumni had convinced Sayers, a high school star for Omaha Central, to attend college in Lawrence where he could be part of a winning football program. At the time, Jayhawk country seemed to be the better place for a talented running back looking to make a name for himself. Jennings tried to sell Sayers on coming to Nebraska but he had little backing. Most Nebraska boosters were too busy yelling for Jennings' scalp.

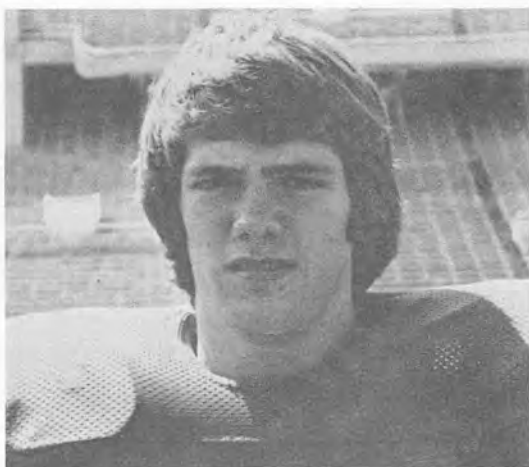
The Cornhuskers did sign a loyal Kent McCloughan, who later went on to stardom and three bowl trips with Nebraska. He later became an all-pro defensive back with the Oakland Raiders and invented the "bump and run" technique so popular in the 1970's. He invested his pro money wisely in the Ft. Collins, Colo., area and is today a scout for the Raiders.

Bobby Williams received a certificate of attendance from his high school instead of a diploma, so he wasn't able to gain entrance to the University of Nebraska, and efforts to put him in a junior college failed. He ended up at a small four year college in Oklahoma and later became a starting defensive back with the Detroit Lions.

With the state so sparsely populated, it was a blow to land only one of three such high-caliber native football players. The recruiting defeats off the field also hurt Jennings' stature with the Nebraska faithful because finding talented players always had been considered his strength as a coach. With five losing seasons and the highly-publicized recruiting blows, it wasn't surprising that University top brass asked for Jennings to resign.

His five losing seasons meant that Nebraska had played better than .500 football in only three seasons since 1940, the Rose Bowl year. Before 1940, the pinnacle of Cornhusker football until the 1960's, Nebraska had only two losing seasons

in 50 years of football. Football at Nebraska simply had never bounced back since the day Biff Jones was called away from the Cornhuskers by the Army. With Nebraska searching for the 24th coach in the school's history and the ninth since Jones left, memories of Nebraska football greatness had faded to a flicker.



Jim Pilen — "From a great football family"

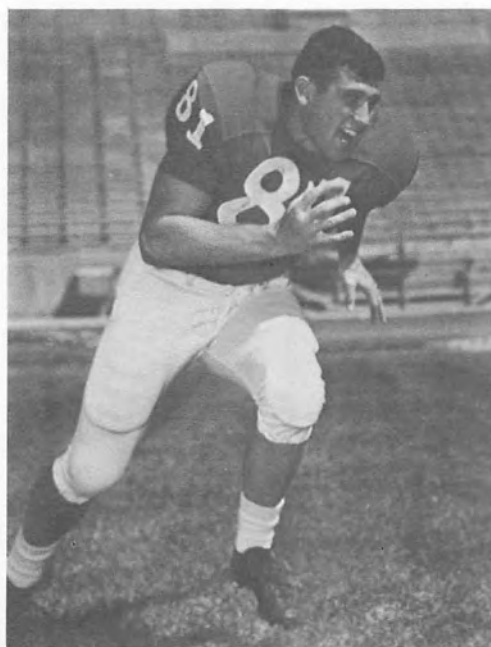


Norrie Anderson — Football News

"If Robert Redford looked like me he'd still be #1 at the box office."



Pat Fischer — a super-star



Mike Grace — Knee injury hurt career

Chapter 12

The Irishman

Rumors were circulating that the great Michigan State coach, Duffy Daugherty, might be available when Nebraska went searching for a new coach for the 1962 season. Chancellor Cliff Hardin quickly got on the phone to Daugherty, a man he knew from his own days as dean at Michigan State. But Duffy told inquiring Nebraskans he wasn't available. Instead, he recommended one of his former assistants, Bob Devaney, then a successful coach at Wyoming. Hardin elected to handle this situation himself. The new athletic director, Tippy Dye, told me he had just moved into Lincoln and didn't have his feet on the ground. Hiring Devaney is one of the things for which Chancellor Hardin will always be remembered.

Devaney flew to the Lincoln airport under an assumed name, Mr. R. Roberts, salesman. In cloak-and-dagger fashion, Devaney was discreetly shown the Nebraska campus and films of the 1961 Nebraska team. Though he kept a poker face as he watched the films, Devaney concluded Jennings' recruiting for the school hadn't been quite as dismal as the alumni thought, and admitted he was interested in the job. When Nebraska offered to pay him \$17,000, Devaney accepted.

But Wyoming school officials weren't so willing to give up Devaney, who had compiled a 35-10-5 record in five years and taken the Cowboys to the Sun Bowl. He had just been given a new five-year contract and officials made Devaney sweat out his agreement before finally releasing him from it. For an entire month, Devaney was running the football departments at two different schools, not sure which one he would be heading the next fall.

The first time I saw a picture of Devaney, it was a pose where he wasn't smiling and I thought he looked a lot like Broderick Crawford, the movie actor, except more pleasant. I felt he looked like a typical coach and at the right age he would have the maturity to handle a tough situation which certainly described the actual picture at Nebraska; fans were sick of losing seasons. Fortunately, this was one of the few times I was right, as my friends are always quick to remind me I was the guy that predicted Liz Taylor was going to be a nun.



Coach Bob Devaney

Devaney was 46 when he agreed to come to Nebraska. He had been a fair athlete in football, basketball and baseball as a youth at Saginaw High School in Michigan. After high school and in the middle of the Great Depression, Devaney quit a job with a Chevrolet foundry in Alma, Mich., and decided to attend college there. He pumped gas and waited on tables to pay for his tuition and actually had a better athletic career in college as captain and all-conference end with his football team. In his senior year, Devaney decided he wanted to be a football coach and in 1939, he became basketball and football coach at Big Beaver High School in Birmingham, Mich. Devaney moved on to coaching jobs at Saginaw and later Alpena where he earned a reputation by winning 52 of 61 games for the school, located on Lake Huron. By then, Devaney was 37 and had decided if he didn't get anywhere as coach by the time he was 40, he would give up coaching and spend more time with his wife, Phyllis.

But that same year, he received a call from Duffy Daugherty at Michigan State, asking him to become a college football assistant. Devaney stayed in football coaching and in 1956, at age 41, he became head football coach at Wyoming. Devaney was filled with personality, complete with a set of dancing Irish eyes. The leadership role that was such a mystery to Bill Jennings was one Devaney could wear like an old tee-shirt. He is noted for his quick Irish wit. At Wyoming, he developed a reputation as an organizer and recruiter. But he also was a great innovator and at Nebraska he proved he was a great opportunist.

At Nebraska Devaney brought the Cornhuskers to heights never before attained. He built the golden years, accumulating a 101-20-2 record and in 11 years took Nebraska to nine bowl games and seven Big Eight Conference championships. He led Nebraska to two national championships and built the finest coaching staff in the nation. He demonstrated he was not discriminating in his recruiting and molded city boys and ghetto blacks with Nebraska's home-grown country boys into awesome football teams. He always provided the spark between winning and losing. When introduced at bowl luncheons, his players always gave him standing ovations.



Dennis Claridge — “Could be our best quarterback ever.”

It all started in the fall of 1962, as Devaney led Nebraska to a season-opening win over South Dakota 53-0. It was an easy win, of course, not much different than Jennings' 33-0 win over North Dakota just a year earlier in the season opener. But the starved Nebraska fans gave Devaney a standing ovation that day when the team passed on first down. The Husker faithful had grown so tired of the former "Two yards and a cloud of dust" offense that they were frantic for some action.

Devaney earned the applause a week later when Nebraska raised eyebrows by beating a highly-regarded Michigan team 25-13 at Lansing. Quarterback Dennis Claridge, who had opened the Devaney era by completing his first pass the week before, joined with Dennis Stuewe and Willie Ross as the game's stars.

Senior Thunder Thornton had a special role in the game, the first display of Devaney's ingenuity as a football coach. Thornton had suffered a shoulder dislocation but wanted desperately to play in the Michigan game. His mother and many friends from nearby Toledo, Ohio, were at the game and Thornton begged to get in the action. For most of the game, Devaney used the ailing Thornton as a decoy. Twice, other players scored as Thornton carried out his fakes. Then, as Michigan started looking elsewhere for the football, Thornton carried it in for two touchdowns.

That evening 2,500 Nebraska fans welcomed home their heroes. Some cars were backed up in traffic on the way to the airport, causing one player to say, "Air travel would be much safer if they could eliminate the car ride to and from the airport."

After beating Iowa State 36-22, the Cornhuskers came from behind to beat North Carolina State 19-14 in a pulse-pounder. Later, Devaney quipped to reporters that he planned for the contest to be close, in order to keep people around for the entire game to promote concession sales. The statement helped provide Devaney with an adoring public. The Devaney magic continued in a 26-6 win at Kansas State and a 31-6 triumph at Colorado.

Nebraska already was guaranteed a winning season and was 6-0, going into a televised game with Missouri. But the Tigers, coached by Dan Devine, were too much for the still-developing Cornhuskers and won 16-7. Missouri controlled the game, due mostly to two fumbled punts by a Husker safety but Noel

Martin of Clay Center, Kan., pirated a pass on the Nebraska 12 and returned it 88 yards just before the half to cut the score to 9-7. The personable Martin, who later married former coach Bill Jennings' daughter, jokingly admitted, "My speed is deceptive — I'm slower than I look."

Devaney found the incentive he needed to bring his players back against Kansas the following week. Jennings was now an assistant at Kansas and Devaney said it was an opportunity to play against the school's old coach. More importantly, Devaney didn't want Nebraska to be shown up by the state's recruiting loss, Gale Sayers.

Nebraska went through one of its wildest midweek scrimmages in years, following the Missouri loss. Devaney worked his players hard, trying to rid them of the hurt from the Missouri loss. Meanwhile, the Kansas City press was predicting an easy time for the Jayhawks and reporters' midweek shots at the Cornhuskers increased. The pre-game practices were so intense that quarterback John Faiman of Omaha South received a broken leg.

It was a road game I didn't want to miss. Nebraska was 6-1 and I had to know which way the Cornhusker football fortunes were destined to go. So I packed up the family and made the mistake of staying with my brother-in-law in Overland Park, a Kansas City suburb. The entire weekend, I was subjected to the slanted reports of the Kansas City newspapers, television and my in-laws' friends. They told me that Gale Sayers might be the greatest football player to ever live. They told me that Jennings knew Nebraska's weaknesses like the back of my hand. Their arguments were hard to ignore.

The 50-mile drive from Kansas City to Lawrence had me feeling like a condemned man heading toward the gallows. My brother-in-law, Wally Johnson, a Kearney native and great Husker fan, and I were the main course at a pre-game lunch with a couple of his Kansas friends. We were told the Jayhawks would name the score with Sayers running on open throttle. Looking about in Jayhawk country, I was reminded of what General George Armstrong Custer must have said at Little Bighorn: "I never saw so d... many Indians in all my life."

We parked the car south of the stadium and the journey down Mount Oread, a sloping walk to the entrance of the stands, seemed like climbing Pike's Peak with a wheelbarrow full of cement. My hands were shaking like leaves as I sat

among other somber red-clad fans. A few nervous friends came over for one of my usual pre-game pep talks. I have a reputation for being overly optimistic about our chances of winning, so a few cheerful, re-assuring words were all these worried fans were looking for. My in-laws' friends and the Kansas City press had left me numb, however. One of the fans said, "Wink, I've seen men on their deathbeds looking better than you." I tried to smile as I gazed at the Jayhawk locker room entrance where I expected some Biblical Coliseum lions to come out on the field.

But the agonizing wait was worth it. Kansas ended up being the victim. The Nebraska team not only upset the Jayhawks; they humiliated them. Willie Ross, Thunder Thornton and the entire company of Nebraska backs went through Kansas with the ease of General George Patton's tank division in a boy scout camp. Nebraska led 32-0 before the first half mercifully ended for Coach "Jumping Jack" Mitchell and his Kansans.

It was during the half that many of the hard-core Nebraska fans released emotions that had been pent up since the 1941 Rose Bowl. Several had come on a chartered train, where as much alcohol is consumed as by car, only not in the engine. They were overcome by the spirit of the moment and a few other "spirits" and poured out onto the field to form their own spirit line for the Cornhuskers to charge through at the start of the second half. Dejected Kansas players had just emerged onto the field in time to watch Nebraska's team storm out behind six-foot, six-inch, 275-pound gridder Carl Samuelson, a former Husker great. A dead ringer for a locomotive, Samuelson was followed by the Nebraskans' spirit line and had borrowed a couple of cheerleaders' pom-poms to lead the Cornhusker charge. The picture of the massive Samuelson thundering onto the field shaking the pom-poms was enough to strike terror in Kansans and send the Nebraska faithful into orbit. It was the kind of spontaneous behavior from players and fans that naturally characterized victory-starved Cornhusker fans.

Though Devaney cleared his bench for the second half, the game was being played all-out during this brief but fierce rivalry between the two universities. Nebraska won 40-16 in a game that had one final oddity. It ended with both teams trying and succeeding in going for two-point conversions after each touchdown. Nebraska scored five touchdowns in the game and Kansas, two.

After the victory, Husker fans hung around the dressing room and led each other in cheers. It had been an important win for the Nebraska football program and fans wanted to soak in every moment. My walk back up Mount Oread was much easier than the journey down. My in-laws' friends were in mourning after the loss and I tried to remain respectfully silent. I was only glad it wasn't a real funeral because I couldn't stop smiling.

That win was followed by a hard-fought 14-0 triumph over Oklahoma State. Then the big game of the year arrived. Nebraska was ready to test its 8-1 season against Oklahoma. Nebraska faithful traveled by planes, buses, cars, trains and even trucks and motorcycles for the big showdown in Norman. Football talk and traffic along Norman's famed Cherokee Strip seemed more like a Sunday School convention preparing for the Second Coming.

During the Kansas game, I had become so enthralled by the spirit of the Big Red train travelers that I decided to accompany them on the Oklahoma trek. Not a drinker myself, I was overwhelmed by the fumes of alcohol on the way down. I remember two well-watered fans sitting across the aisle from each other, sharing a bottle of spirits. One finally told the other, "You know, this is the only way to travel. Here you are on the way to Oklahoma and me on the way to Omaha and we meet, right here."

The ride was a noisy one. Only those who were sleeping it off could slumber. Many fans joined in a snake dance through all the cars most of the night. When the train reached Oklahoma City, several cars from the train had to be let off in order to turn it around in Norman for the trip back. So Big Red fans had to bunch up for the final miles. The close quarters only added to good fellowship and the carnival atmosphere. In contrast to my uncertain Kansas trip, I was surrounded by fans who believed we couldn't lose.

But even the Devaney magic needed refining for Oklahoma. An early Nebraska drive was stopped by a dropped pass. Then when a punt by the Huskers' Jim "Twinkle Toes" Baffaco was blocked, the ebb of the battle turned. Oklahoma dominated the second half for a 34-6 win.

Undaunted, the Big Red train riders took up the battle cry, "Wait'll next year!" When the train reached the Lincoln depot, a sign was posted that read, "Remember, You Can't Win Them All." Nebraskans' heads were bloodied but unbowed. After the

loss, Wally Provost of the Omaha World-Herald wrote, "The gloom of the moment reposed the pleasant truth that Nebraska had just concluded its most successful season in 22 years."

The 8-2 season wasn't good enough for Devaney, already willing to settle for nothing less than immortality. He didn't want the season to end on a losing note. He hoped against hope for a bowl bid. Oklahoma had the lock on the Orange Bowl and Missouri was headed toward the Liberty Bowl. Chances didn't look good, but Devaney knew nothing helped team moral and recruiting like bowl games.

Then in late November a bid came — from the financially troubled Gotham Bowl. It was an invitation not much better than one to buy the Brooklyn Bridge, but Devaney made the most of it. New York City is not Miami but the magic of playing in a bowl game was still there. All that mattered was Nebraska was going to its third bowl in the school's history. Bowl games were only for schools with winning football programs.

The Gotham Bowl turned out to be the last one ever played. Devaney and his coaches and players waited at the Lincoln airport for the bowl officials' check to be put in escrow before getting on the plane. The decision proved to be a wise one. Sponsors of the Big Apple event took a financial bath. Only 6,166 tickets were sold to the game and only 1,000 persons ever saw it.

It was very obvious from the beginning that the Miami Hurricanes were the "fair-haired boys" and that promoters just got the Huskers there as an opponent that was supposed to get beat. This only added to the Huskers' determination to win before the eastern top brass.

The Miami quarterback George Mira was rated as one of the best throwers in the college circles and besides his throwing ability, he was a Fran Tarkenton type of scrambler.

It was easy to see from the beginning that the revenue from the national telecast was going to be the only substantial source of revenue.

The temperature for the game was a sub-freezing 15 degrees and winds made the day much colder. That prompted the always thinking Devaney to suit his players in thermal longjohn underwear. Despite the frozen day, the great Mira threw for 321 yards passing and the game turned into a scoring contest. Nebraska scored on a 93-yard kickoff return by Willie Ross and

added a 41-yard romp from scrimmage as Nebraska nosed to a 36-34 win, even though Miami compiled 34 first downs to the Cornhuskers' 12.



Willie Ross — You see it's lonesome at Gotham Bowl as Ross completes a 40-yard run to set up the first score. Willie later reeled off a 93-yard kickoff return for a touchdown in the 15 degree weather.

Afterward, Devaney stood on a bench in the locker room of Yankee Stadium and told his players, "You've made me famous. I've received a number of offers to lecture on defense."

But a bowl win was what Devaney wanted. He had the national exposure he needed for recruiting. The win helped Nebraska recruit the likes of "Jumping" John O'Leary, who many say is the best thing to ever come out of Manhattan since we negotiated it from the Indians for \$28. Also, it was one of the first times that future Cornhusker great Richard Berns watched Nebraska play on television.

Then the coaching staff fanned out all over the nation, with a bowl win under their belts, and recruited like there was no tomorrow. Once Devaney convinced an athlete to attend school at Nebraska, he continued to see that the student was a happy one. He told his coaches to be available to the players. If any of the players was having girl trouble or financial problems, Devaney wanted a coach to be available to listen.

This was one of the first assignments that Tom Osborne had when he joined the N.U. staff: to work with any player who might be having trouble with his classroom assignments as a player is no good to a team if he is scholastically ineligible.

Later Ursala Walsh joined the staff as a full-time Athletic Department academic counselor. Many players are quick to give this very personable woman credit for the remarkable job she does. I was very proud indeed to have been present when the Omaha Sportcasters Group gave her recognition last winter for her work with our young athletes.



Ursala Walsh — a wonderful addition to staff.

Since Dr. Osborne and Ms. Walsh have been handling this department, the number of athletes who have been declared scholastically ineligible has been limited. Many have raised their grade averages considerably. Also the number of Nebraska gridders who have been named to the Academic All-Big Eight and All-American teams has almost doubled. It is a known fact that this is very helpful in the recruiting department as any parent is glad to know that their son is receiving a quality education instead of just "passing through."

Another Devaney innovation was the development of the Blackshirts, the color of the practice jersey awarded to only the starting members of the school's defensive squad. Devaney's defensive coaches wanted their players to appreciate the individual recognition they could achieve without ever touching the football. Offensive players became known for their blocking skills. Nobody could consider being a running back at Nebraska unless he could block.

The changes didn't happen overnight. Nor was Devaney singly responsible for all the changes. I'll always feel that Devaney's strong point was being able to pick top assistant coaches and give them the authority to do their job. They were tested coaches who knew what winning was all about and they thought like winners and reflected this off and on the field. In all cases, they were fine recruiters.



Coach Jim Ross — a person I truly admire for what he did for young men.



Nearly 20 years later I received one of my all-time thrills when my dear friend Kris Saalfeld of Columbus was named as the 1980 Homecoming Queen. She is the sister of our former star center, Kelly.

Chapter 13

Early Success

After a 58-7 home opener over South Dakota in 1963, Nebraska faced an early challenge at Minnesota. There was a running battle between the Twin City press and the University of Nebraska that went back to Bill Jennings. Newspapers in Minneapolis and St. Paul were calling for an end to the series between the Gophers and Cornhuskers because of successful recruiting by Nebraska ivory hunters in fertile Minnesota. Ironically, Minnesota had spent decades as a national power simply because it recruited players while most colleges in days gone by didn't offer athletic scholarships. Nebraska had been a perennial victim of Minnesota for the outdated principle. Minnesota scribes also had forgotten that Gopher coaches were more than willing to have Fred Farthing, a former Omaha Tech sprinter and speedy halfback, leave Nebraska to play his football in the north country.

Regardless, 5,000 revitalized Nebraska fans journeyed with their team to watch the early showdown. Dennis Claridge, the Robbinsdale, Minn., product and center of controversy raised by the Twin City media, quarterbacked Nebraska to a 14-7 win. He was a thorn in the side of his native state all day and threw a pass to tight end Tony Jeter for the winning touchdown. The sad note to the game, however, was that Nebraska lost its tiny fullback, Frank Solich, because of a broken ankle. The 156-pounder, now a member of the Nebraska coaching staff, missed the rest of the season but was able to join the team for its bowl game.

Devaney continued his successful influence with Nebraska by beating Iowa State 21-7, but then the Cornhuskers had to host the Air Force Academy, possibly one of the last great Service Academy teams. A bombardier named Terry Isaacson was at quarterback for the Falcons and he hurt Nebraska just as much with his scrambling running style as he did with his passing. The game had a bad start and misfortune, including an injury to Claridge, plagued Nebraska all day. Nebraska still clung to a 13-10 lead. Then late in the game, a Cornhusker defensive back missed his assignment on a long pass and Nebraska was upset 17-13. Fred Duda, an excellent prospect

from Chicago, had spelled Claridge at quarterback but it wasn't enough. It was the first stumble by a Devaney team. I remember feeling like the farmer who had inherited a pumpkin farm only to learn they had outlawed Halloween.

Nebraska was able to shake off the loss to beat Kansas State 28-6 and then Colorado 41-6 to set up a re-match with the tough Missouri Tigers. Only this time, Nebraska had to play on the road. Despite Missouri being as tough as the season before, Devaney led his troops to a 13-12 win. Bruce Smith, a defensive back from Falls City, made a game-saving hit on a two-point conversion try by Missouri. It was out of the frying pan and into the fire, as revenge-minded Gale Sayers and Kansas invaded Lincoln the following week. Sayers dazzled everyone with a 99-yard run from the Kansas one, but Nebraska won the game 23-9. The following game against Oklahoma State was just as tough, but Devaney remained a lucky Irishman; the Cornhuskers rallied late in the game for a 20-16 victory. The 8-1 gridgers were set for a re-match with Oklahoma and the winner earned a trip to the Orange Bowl.

Devaney was taking no chances and held his practices for the game in secret. Most experts said Oklahoma had the edge and bookies were taking the Okies and giving three points. The Midwest was buzzing about the titanic struggle which was expected.

But Friday of that week, Nov. 23, 1963, changed the entire atmosphere of the game. Shortly past noon, Central Standard Time, shots rang out from the Book Depository in downtown Dallas and life was snuffed from President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. A grief-stricken nation was at a standstill. Everywhere decisions had to be made about the normal courses of everyday life. At many schools, football games were canceled. At Nebraska, school officials felt the President would have wanted the game to be played. For much of the afternoon, Nebraska and Oklahoma officials conferred with Big Eight faculty representatives and decided finally to go ahead and play the contest. In a dramatic moment, the next Saturday, fans at Memorial Stadium stood silent in a tribute to the fallen President.

Without a doubt, the incident had a dramatic impact on everyone who played or watched the contest some 24 hours after the assassination. But the game also was an illustration of the resiliency of human beings and how quickly life can mend

in a free society. Once the football was on the tee, Nebraska football fans put aside the world's troubles and excitedly watched the great match-up between the Cornhuskers and Sooners.

In Grand Island that week, the "Downtown" quarterbacks were as tight as a drum. I remember my fellow cohorts gathered at the "Big Boo" Cafe weighing the pros and cons of both teams during one of our daily autumn coffee sessions. We made owner George Boosalis so nervous with our pessimistic analysis that he dropped a tray of dishes and had all his customers applauding. This eased the pressure.

That Saturday, Devaney had motivated the Cornhuskers to a fevered pitch. On the first play from scrimmage, All-American tackle Lloyd Voss rushed into the Oklahoma backfield on the first snap and nearly chased a Sooner ball carrier out of the stadium. That set the tempo of play for the Big Red. Nebraska led 29-7 with six minutes to play. The always alert Devaney cleared his bench so younger players could be a part of this winning tradition though it allowed the Sooners to garner two quick touchdowns.

Right after the game, Nebraska accepted a bid to the Orange Bowl. The Cornhuskers finished the regular season with a No. 5 rating by United Press International and No. 6 by the Associated Press. It was the highest Nebraska rating since the 1940 Rose Bowl team.

Orange Bowl

Auburn, rated just ahead of the Huskers, was selected as Nebraska's Orange Bowl opponent. The Tigers of Shug Jordan were known for their tough defense but also sported a flashy quarterback in Jimmy Sidle and a bruising fullback in future pro great Tucker Fredricksen. Devaney took his players to the game in a loose frame of mind. He had two rules: When it was time to think about football, the players kept their minds on business. Also, it was fine to party and have a good time as long as the players didn't go too far. Devaney wanted his players to enjoy some of the bowl luster they had missed the year before in New York City.

In between the sun and the fun, Devaney completely prepared his troops for a tough game. On New Year's Day, nearly 73,000 fans had barely settled themselves in their seats when quarterback Dennis Claridge took the snap from center,

dropped back for two steps and then darted through a wide hole in the middle of the Auburn line. He wasn't even touched as he made his way down the sideline for a 68-yard touchdown run. Before the half was over, Dave Theisen added a pair of field goals for a 13-0 lead. Sidle put Auburn on the board with a 13-yard touchdown run in the third quarter and kept Nebraskans nervous throughout the second half. But linebacker John Kirby of David City knocked down a pass late in the final quarter to stop an Auburn drive and preserve the win. The game was the last for All-American tackle Bob Brown, the first Nebraskan to earn such an honor in more than a decade.



Bob Brown

1964

In 1964, Devaney followed up the previous 10-1 Nebraska season, by flirting with a national championship. Again South Dakota was the sacrificial lamb in a 56-0 season opening win by

the Big Red. Then Nebraska again traveled to the Twin Cities to become the first Cornhusker team to ever beat the Gophers twice in a row. But the game was a struggle and after three quarters, Nebraska trailed 21-12. Then with eight minutes to play, "Fearless Fred" Duda, Nebraska's option quarterback, found the pint-sized Frank Solich open in the secondary and the fullback took the pass over his shoulder to cut the lead to 21-19. Nebraska's defense held, and then with wide receiver Freeman White making a spectacular catch on a fourth down pass, Duda brought the Huskers back down the field. On the winning play, halfback Kent McCloughan grabbed a Duda aerial after it actually bounced off a defender's helmet and skipped into the end zone for a 26-21 comeback win. By now, even the most doubtful of Nebraska fans were convinced Devaney was a man of destiny.

The high of the Minnesota game dropped to a low the next week, however. In a hard fought 14-7 win over Iowa State, Duda tragically broke his leg while directing Nebraska to a score. His exit from the field on a stretcher is one of the most unhappy scenes I have ever witnessed. Not too far away was Devaney with his arm around an untested sophomore quarterback from Omaha North named Bob Churchich. He was a lad with a strong baseball background, but now he needed his composure to hold together Nebraska's unbeaten season. After he successfully executed his first call, the story is Churchich forgot his next play and succeeded thereafter because of veteran backs Kent McCloughan and Bobby Hohn helping him on his next call.

Near me that day in the crowd was Fred Duda's father, who had journeyed from Chicago to Ames to watch his son play. Until the day I die I will never forget this wonderful man crawling over the fence to try to catch up to the ambulance that was speeding his son toward a hospital. The scene dampened the game for the rest of us who had been cheering with him just moments before.

The crafty Churchich found his composure much quicker than we found ours and led the Nebraska win. Mostly noted for his passing ability, Churchich was always complimented by Devaney for picking out his secondary receivers as well as any field general he had ever coached.

After that bittersweet win, Nebraska won with precision against South Carolina, Kansas State and Colorado for a 6-0

record. But Missouri came to Lincoln looking for revenge. The Tigers kept the now seasoned Churchich in check for much of the afternoon, but Nebraska's defense was even better as Langston Coleman, an end from Washington, D.C., nailed the Tiger quarterback in the end zone for a safety. The slim 2-0 lead held up until Churchich dodged three Missouri defenders before firing a pass to McCloughan, who had only Tiger speedster Johnny Roland to beat to the end zone. Roland was able to climb on McCloughan's back but Larry Kramer, a future All-American from Minnesota, peeled Roland off McCloughan's back like a banana with a crushing block. The eastern part of the state felt the stadium shaking with delight as Nebraska handed Missouri its first shutout since 1937.

Nebraska then had to travel to Kansas to try to beat the Jayhawks for the third time in a row. The revenge-minded Kansans knew they had to win this one for their all-star senior, Gayle Sayers. He had enrolled at Kansas to play with a winner but Nebraska had pinned a humiliating defeat on him before the hometown Kansans in his sophomore year and beat KU in Lincoln the next year. The Jayhawks were primed for bear.

Kansas scored early in the game and were headed for another when Nebraska put together a four play goal-line stand that is still one of my greatest thrills. The Jayhawk fans were still chirping over the quick score and confident of victory but my good friend Dick Czap burst from his defensive position to bump the KU quarterback and throw the timing of the play off and help give the Blackshirts one of the most crucial goal-line stands in Nebraska history.

After that Nebraska doggedly stopped any further Jayhawk advances. Then backed up to the Husker eight, Churchich dropped back and flipped a short pass from out of the end zone to Freeman White. The speedy Detroit native took the football and streaked 92 yards which went into the books as the longest touchdown pass in Nebraska history. Nebraska methodically moved to a 14-7 lead at the half and then held on for the win. But the end of the game led to the invention of pacemakers. In the final moments of the game, Kansas quarterback Bob Skahan dropped back and threw a strike to Gayle Sayers. The future pro great was in the clear down the sidelines and was just tucking the football away when he kicked it loose with his high striding knee. After a brief juggle in Sayers' fingers, the ball rolled harmlessly to the ground incomplete. George Boosalis,

the Grand Island restaurant tycoon, and Frank Gion, a Grand Island builder, say I almost had a heart attack. "Big Boo" to this day insists I rose in an absolute state of shock and screamed, "Sayers, you're still playing for Nebraska!" I can't remember this as I was almost delirious.

With the satisfaction of beating Kansas during all three of Sayers' collegiate years, Nebraska hosted Oklahoma State and prevailed 27-14 as Frank Solich broke loose on an 89-yard kickoff return.

Then came disappointment at the hands of Oklahoma. Nebraska was near the top of the wire service bowl contenders and hoping for a national title bowl game when the team boarded a plane for Norman. The Cornhuskers kept to their game plan for three quarters, holding a 7-3 lead. But Oklahoma scored twice for a 17-7 upset. The final Sooner drive was one of the toughest trench battles I ever witnessed. But the Sooners managed two or three crucial first downs by inches. My hands were clenched almost in prayer and I may have even uttered a couple of silent pleas between the resounding thuds each time the ball was snapped. But as a friend later told me, "I never said so many prayers in all my life but I believe those Southern Baptists must have outprayed me." Devaney was quick to credit the Oklahoma defense for the win. Nebraska had been rushing 242 yards a game that year but managed only 82 against the Sooners. The Oklahoma game ended Nebraska's hopes for a national title that year.

Cotton Bowl

Even though the Oklahoma loss took the Huskers out of the national title picture, Nebraska was still a Big Eight Conference co-champion. By virtue of their win, the Sooners received the Orange Bowl bid. But Nebraska's No. 6 rating made the Cornhuskers an attractive prospect for other bowl officials. Noting that a large group of Nebraskans had accompanied the Cornhuskers to Miami the year before, Cotton Bowl officials extended the school an invitation to play Arkansas, the Southwest Conference champions. It was Nebraska's fifth bowl bid and the third straight for Bob Devaney. But by now, Nebraska fans stopped counting.

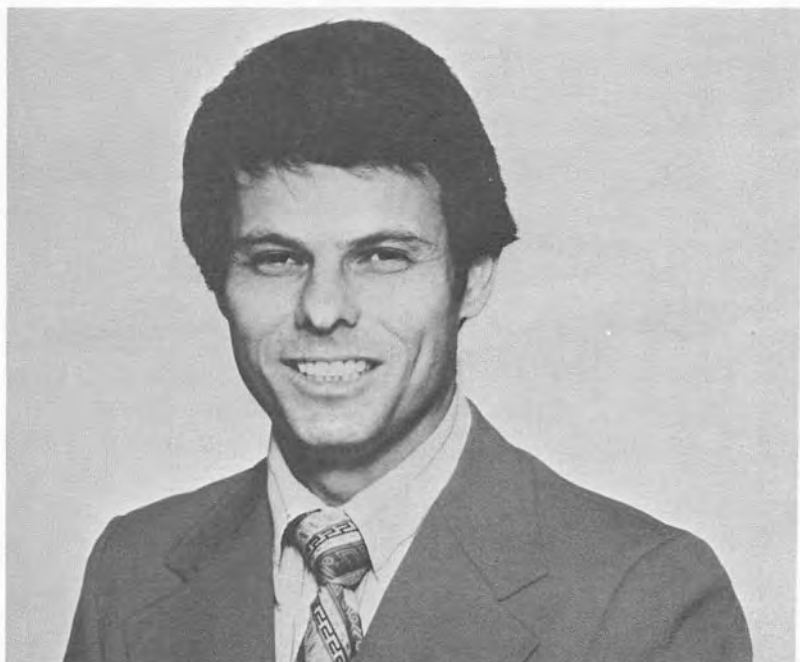
The migration south that year was another impressive one by Big Red rooters. A large contingent of fans would show up each day just to watch Nebraska practice. I remember my daily

visits to the workouts with Omahan Chuck Seckman, because that's where he introduced me to Wayne and Ruth Hogg of Omaha, another set of faithful fans. Among other things, Wayne Hogg is a great connoisseur of restaurants and in Dallas he was, as the Razorback fans would have put it, in hog heaven. While there are no beaches in Dallas, the city is rivaled only by New Orleans for its wonderful eating establishments. Wayne spent several practice sessions telling me about this wonderful Dallas steakhouse he had discovered and invited my group to spend an unforgettable New Year's Eve dinner with him and his wife. To shorten the story, the early dishes lived up to expectations. The salad was tasty and crisp, the coffee was delicious and the trimmings were sensational. But when the steak arrived, I couldn't have cut it with a fire axe. It was a shaky moment in our new friendship. But we did go on to become great friends. I always admire the Hoggs' Nebraska loyalty. Even when things for the Nebraska football team get as tough as that steak, they always have something constructive to say. They are the typical Nebraska fans, I'm happy to say. In fact, wherever the Big Red faithful travel during the bowl season, most are ambassadors of goodwill for our state.

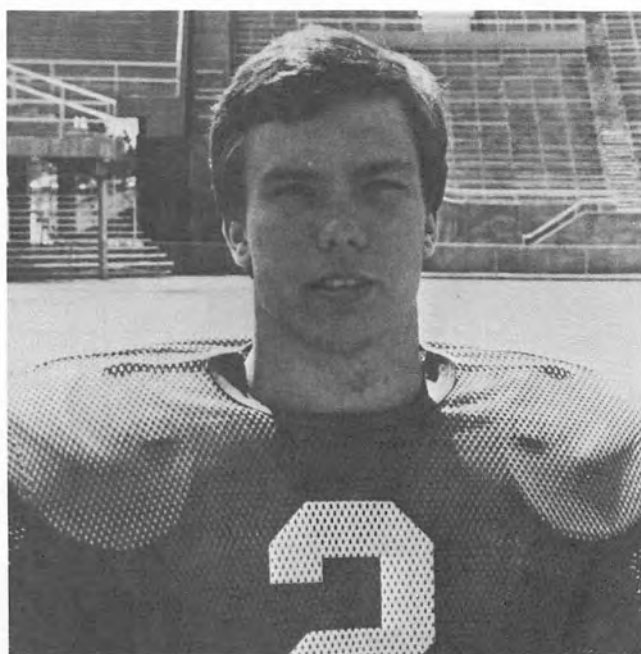
The only time I can remember fans becoming irritable during the first Cotton Bowl trip was when Razorback backers would slip up and yell, "Soo-ee Pig!" This was all Nebraska visitors heard from the Arkansas fans during the visit and I'm among the many who won't be disappointed if I never hear those overbearing pig calls again.

Devaney again made sure his football team had a good time, but also had his Cornhuskers ready for the game, one of the greatest defensive battles in bowl history. Nebraska led 7-3 at the half when "Lighthorse" Harry Wilson capped a 69-yard drive with a plunge over from the one behind a block by All-American Larry Kramer. Nebraska held Arkansas to just 45 yards rushing that day but the Razorbacks put together an 80-yard drive in the final quarter with Bobby Burnett scoring from the three for the 10-7 win.

For the first time at Nebraska, Devaney had been dealt a bowl loss and two defeats in a row. Fans were still excited by the magical Irishman, but some wondered if, finally, Nebraska football fortunes might be returning to earth.



Frank Solich — "A tough 150 pounder."



Jeff Krejci — another Schuyler deluxe.



John Strohmyer — Lexington



Monte Kiffin — Great player · Great Coach

Chapter 14

The Tide Turns

If there was ever anything that stuck in Bob Devaney's craw in his successful coaching reign at Nebraska, it was Alabama. The successive losses after an almost unbeaten 1964 season were an unhappy ending for the smiling Irishman, but they were nothing compared to losses in bowl games during the next two seasons. Both defeats were at the hands of Bear Bryant and his Crimson Tide. Nebraska's 39-28 loss to Alabama in the Orange Bowl cost the Cornhuskers a national title while a 34-7 defeat in the Sugar Bowl the next year was as lopsided as the bowl defeat handed by Duke to Bill Glassford and his squad in 1955.

The bowl setbacks did teach Devaney one of the important coaching lessons he didn't already have in practice. Until running into Alabama, Devaney relied on massive lineman and big running backs to dominate other football teams. In the losses to Alabama, Nebraska was outflanked by smaller but quicker athletes. Nebraska's big running backs could be stopped for short gains when met by a swarming defense. Until the Alabama losses, Devaney was known mostly as a coach who fit his strategies to the physical characteristics of the players he had. One year, when Nebraska wasn't blessed with a passer, Devaney quipped, "This year, we're only going to pass enough to amuse the alumni." But after Alabama, Devaney made sure his team was never again short of quick players.

1965

One reason fans weren't ready to panic at the start of the 1965 season was that both quarterbacks Bob Churchich and Fred Duda were back, giving Nebraska a tandem of the best signal-calling experience in the nation. The Cornhuskers jumped to a fast start with a 34-14 win over Texas Christian University and followed with a 27-17 revenge win over Air Force, the team that had ruined an unbeaten season two years earlier. In that game, Frank Solich (the exception to Devaney's big back rule) rushed for 205 yards, breaking a 1950 single-game high of 187 yards by Bobby Reynolds against Minnesota. Included in the

day's running was an 80-yard carry by Solich. The play was executed just as X's and O's are drawn up on the blackboard. Every Nebraska player on the field threw a perfect block and Solich wasn't even touched during the scoring run.

Then Nebraska mowed through a series of opponents. First Iowa State fell 44-0. Then Wisconsin toppled 37-0. Next, Kansas State dropped 41-0 as Nebraska posted its third straight shutout. Colorado was a 38-13 victim and that set up a Big Eight Conference showdown at Missouri.

The Tigers, never an easy game during the Devaney years, gave the unbeaten Cornhuskers an early jolt by building a 14-0 lead in the first quarter. But Nebraska didn't panic. Missouri's vicious defense kept Nebraska from driving, but Harry Wilson and Duda both broke free on long runs and each set up a touchdown score by North Platte's Pete Tatman. The usually reliable Larry Wachholtz missed on the extra point try after the second touchdown and Nebraska was still trailing 14-13 at the half.

The game was a hard fought defensive standoff in the second half. Each side desperately tried to find an opening in the other's line but always the door was held shut. Ron Kirkland, a tough Nebraska running back, was typical of the effort. On one drive, Devaney called for Nebraska to gamble on fourth down and short yardage. When Kirkland took the handoff, there was no opening and he appeared short of the first down. Kirkland just kept his legs driving and slowly the pile of players nudged forward. The determined runner made his first down by inches.



Ron Kirkland

With time running out, Nebraska put together one last drive and succeeded in moving the ball into Missouri territory. On one key play, a Missouri player was flagged by an official for swearing. Missouri fans reminded the refs in what state the game was being played with a resounding boo, but the penalty was stepped off and Nebraska moved the ball to the 16 yard line with time running out. Devaney called on Wachholtz to atone for his miss and the native Nebraskan never flinched, and his kick gave Nebraska the winning 16-14 margin. That was the game in which Dan Devine uncharacteristically lashed out at the refs, saying, "The Nebraska team should have carried the officials off the field instead of their coaches."



Larry Wachholtz

Nebraska went back home and pounded a now declining Kansas football program 42-6, but the next week at Stillwater, Oklahoma, was just as dramatic as the Missouri thriller. Oklahoma State had put together a rugged crew, led by future Dallas Cowboy great Walt Garrison. The game was one of the finest ever for Garrison as a college player and the future professional bronc rider personally discarded many Husker tacklers that day. The Cornhuskers fortunately outfought the remainder of the Cowboys and had a precarious 21-17 lead. Oklahoma State mustered one last-ditch effort and with only

seconds remaining, moved the football to the Nebraska 21. On the next snap, the ball went to Garrison. He broke tackle-after-tackle until Cornhusker Bill Johnson grabbed him at the five and hung on until help arrived. I remember the thrill of the victory for good friends Norma and Art Richardson of Grand Island. It was the last Nebraska game Art ever saw. He became seriously ill that winter and his death was the loss of a truly great friend and Nebraska fan. But on that day, Art and Norma were having the thrills of their lives and like it should, football had taken them away from their everyday troubles.

With such dramatic victories, Nebraska seemed to have accomplished everything required that year to be a national champion. Yet hard as it was to believe, the 9-0 Cornhuskers still hadn't even had the annual acid test against Oklahoma. This year, the matchup was in Lincoln on Thanksgiving Day, and it was Cornhuskers Charlie "Choo-Choo" Winters and Harry Wilson who provided the trimmings. The Sooners opened a 9-0 lead when Winters started breaking through the line on quick openers. Then it was Wilson's turn, and executing Mike Corgan's famous pivot drill, Lighthorse Harry turned into a whirling dervish on one carry as he took a tackle, put his free hand to the ground and then spun free for a 66-yard touchdown run. Later he caught a 38-yard touchdown strike from quarterback Bob Churchich and relieved Nebraska homemakers served slightly overcooked Thanksgiving dinners to their jubilant husbands as the huskers prevailed 21-7.

Even with a 10-0 record, Nebraska wasn't rated No. 1 in the nation. Since mid-season, Michigan State, Arkansas and Nebraska had maintained unbeaten records and an unlikely series of events were necessary for Nebraska to become champions. This was the year that the Associated Press began its practice of not taking a final poll of teams until *after* the bowl games. It also was the year that the Orange Bowl began playing its game at night for more television exposure. So on New Year's Day in 1966, Nebraska football players spent the day watching other bowls on television and hoping for an upset.

The day started when No. 2 Arkansas was beaten in the Cotton Bowl. Then a mediocre UCLA team upset powerful Michigan State in the Rose Bowl. When Nebraska took the field that night, the Cornhuskers knew they would be national champions with a win over Alabama. More than in any previous trip, this year's Orange Bowl visit had been more business than

fun. Many of the Cornhusker players were on their third bowl trek and this time a national title was calling, not just a good sun tan. Players weren't in Miami for a good time, but all the hard work went for naught. Quarterback Steve Sloan hooked up on several passes with future all-pro receiver Ray Perkins to stun Nebraska with a 24-7 lead at the half. Nebraska recovered in the second half but never could stop the Alabama passing attack and fell 39-28. Despite an 8-1-1 record, the Crimson Tide, rated No. 4 going into the game, was voted national champions. Nebraska ended up being just another victim on that great day of upsets.

Despite the loss, quarterback Bob Churchich tied a record by throwing three touchdown passes after he replaced Fred Duda in the second half. He threw 33 yards to tight end Tony Jeter, a 69-yard bomb to back Ben Gregory and then 14 yards, again to Jeter. Churchich just missed the record by throwing to Freeman White at the Nebraska one. From there Churchich carried over himself for a touchdown.

After the game, Nebraska said good-bye to Duda and three All-Americans, tackle Walt Barnes, Jeter and White, but Devaney had quite a team returning. The line was almost intact with tackle Bob Pickens, guard LaVerne Allers and center Kelly Peterson leading the way. Harry Wilson also was returning as were such defensive greats as future All-American Wayne Meylan at middle guard, linebacker Lynn Senkbeil and tackle Carel Stith. Nebraska fans had to replay the Alabama loss all winter and accept the missed national title, but there *were* good things to look forward to in the autumn of 1966.

1966

The Huskers marched through the season in the same fashion Gen. William Sherman went through Georgia in his march on Atlanta. Texas Christian kept the score close, 14-10, in the opener. In fact, like the Sherman march, there were no slaughters — just a swift advance through the opposition. The victims included Utah State 28-7, Iowa State 12-6, Wisconsin 31-3 and Kansas State 21-10. The first real challenge of the season was Colorado, which opened with a 19-7 lead and had Buffalo fans celebrating prematurely. But then the Huskers took a tug in their belts and put together two of the most perfect fourth-quarter comebacks in the school's fine history. Using a mix of passing and running, the Huskers marched for

touchdown drives of 63 and 65 yards in the final quarter. Of the 46,112 attending the game in Boulder, 15,000 were wearing red and in a frenzy. The comeback was even more remarkable because the Huskers had been denied a touchdown at the end of the third period when officials ruled quarterback Bob Churchich had failed to break the plain on a fourth-down-and-goal snap.

It was a play I'll remember to my death bed. There was Churchich with head, upper body and the pigskin over the goal line and obviously in for the score. When the officials failed to rule the play a touchdown, I was certain it was the turning point in the game. I was afraid even a team with the character of the Huskers would be unable to rally from such a bad call. Of course, the players just fed on the controversial play.

At the time of the play I was seated with good friends, Don and Carolyn Lutrell and Lou and Marguerite McKenzie of Grand Island. Lou, the Third City oil magnate, was sipping on a "jar" of lemonade or some sort of liquid refreshments and matter-of-factly assured me there was nothing to be concerned about. I looked at the 19-7 posted on the scoreboard and then back at the likeable Lou and said, "I only wish I could share your optimism!" Now, "Big Lou" constantly reminds me that I was too faint of heart that day. After Pete Tatman plunged over from the one for the 21-19 Husker win, I turned to Lou and assured him, in his next life, he would return as another Gen. George Patton.

The most awesome game of the season followed with Nebraska ripping Missouri 35-0 on television. The game was supposed to have been close, but Nebraska won the battle in the trenches by literally blowing the Tigers off the line of scrimmage on the snap of the ball. By the game's end, Devaney substituted liberally and a couple of Hastings athletes, Wayne Weber and Tom Smith, hooked up for a touchdown in the win. It was a combination I had watched in high school when the two journeyed 25 miles north to exhibit their skills against Grand Island and I was certainly glad to see them on my side once as they performed in Big Red togs.

Nebraska then followed with a 24-13 win at Kansas and then a 21-6 victory over Oklahoma State before the Huskers traveled to Norman for another annual shootout with the Sooners. The surroundings were familiar, a Thanksgiving Day game before a national television audience with the Big Eight

Conference title on the line. Nebraska piled up the better statistics that day, but as the saying goes, "Statistics are for losers." Nebraska built a 9-7 lead on a short plunge by Dick Davis and a field goal by Larry Wachholtz. But Mike Vachon booted a 14-yard field goal in the final 48 seconds of play as the Sooners upset the No. 4 rated Huskers 10-9.

The loss ruined another perfect season try and sent the Huskers to the Sugar Bowl against the team that beat them a year earlier, Alabama. It was the fifth bowl trip in five years for a Devaney team. It also was a new locale for the Huskers. This time, Nebraska players sampled the French cuisine of New Orleans and enjoyed the Dixieland jazz. Now No. 7, Nebraska also was looking for revenge against Bear Bryant and the Crimson Tide, but Alabama also possessed its own vendetta. The Tide was rated No. 3 behind Notre Dame and Michigan State and was unhappy with the ranking because of an unbeaten regular season.

The great Kenny Stabler, headed for the Oakland Raiders, completely dominated the Huskers with his passing arm. Alabama rolled up a 17-0 lead in the first quarter and added a touchdown at the half. Churchich nearly matched Stabler's performance by completing 21 of 34 passes for 201 yards for Nebraska but only a 15-yard toss to Dick Davis in the final quarter prevented a shutout. With the 34-7 loss, Nebraska joined Alabama as one of few teams in the country with the dubious honor of losing in all four major bowl games.

Chuck Seckman, a good friend and now a retired Florida termite tycoon, was with me when I made my way from the stadium to our car, one of my longest walks away from a Nebraska game. There were some biting remarks from the rabid Alabama fans and even the New Orleans residents joined in the chiding. There was nothing to do but to keep a stiff upper lip. Gen. Douglas MacArthur once said, "I shall return." With less of a ring to it, I just said, "We'll be back."

And of course, we were. When the National Championship team that went unbeaten in 1971 went to the Orange Bowl and humiliated Alabama 38-6, it was my greatest thrill. And since the victim was Alabama, I had a smile big enough to get me top billing in a toothpaste commercial. And while Alabama rooters stood on in horrified silence, I would watch each crushing play and each time scream a little louder, "Wipe that blood off the ball!"

That was a five-year wait, of course. All I could do in New Orleans was try to remain good-natured. It was a dismal ending to quite a season. For the fifth straight season, Devaney had been named the NCAA District Five Coach of the Year. In the Big Eight, Wayne Meylan was named by the United Press as player of the year. Meylan at defensive middle guard, Larry Wachholtz at defensive back and LaVerne Allers at offensive guard were picked All-Americans. Earning honorable mention were running back Harry Wilson, center Kelly Peterson, quarterback Bob Churchich and defensive tackle Carel Stith. As usual, there was an Academic All-American. This year it was Marv Mueller.

1967

Except for Meylan, they were all gone when the 1967 season opened and for the first time, Devaney found himself in a rebuilding year as a Nebraska coach. Red-shirted quarterback Frank Patrick joined sophomore running back Joe Orduna and junior Dick Davis in providing Nebraska with a potent back-field. But there were many new faces, particularly on offense, and the question was how fast players would develop.



Dick Davis

The season didn't start easy, but Nebraska was successful in a 17-7 win over Washington at Seattle and then held the Gophers to three yards rushing in a 7-0 victory. The only score was a 94-yard march that included a 25-yard dazzling run by Joe Orduna, four of five completions by Patrick and some steady running by Davis, who gained 109 yards in the defensive game.

Things were even tougher the next week. Nebraska's defense was just as tough as ever, but in a rain-plagued contest, Kansas State capitalized on two fumbles deep in Nebraska territory for a stunning 14-0 lead in the first quarter. Patrick went to the air game and began flinging the football, mostly to receiver Dennis Richnafsky, who set a Big Eight record that day of 14 catches for 145 yards. Place kicker Bill Bomberger had a PAT try blocked when Nebraska tried to tie the game but then came back and kicked the winning field goal as the Huskers won their final trip in the old Wildcat Stadium 16-14.

The comeback win was as loaded with character as the many Big Red rallies of the season before it. Nebraska's offense just wasn't firing well and even though the Huskers were 3-0, fans were scratching their heads.

Then it came. I still remember the trip down to Lawrence. I went south with friends Chuck Seckman and Wayne Hogg and this trip was much different than one I made four years earlier in Gale Sayers' sophomore year. This time Nebraska was the giant. Fans were filled with confidence. We stopped at a Lawrence gas station just before the game and a service station attendant remarked, "You mean you came all the way down here from Nebraska to watch this high school team play?" Jayhawk fortunes had been dismal losing three games in a row to teams not highly regarded.

But the "high school team", that included a couple of future pro players named Bobby Douglas and John Zook, not only beat Nebraska but shut the Big Red out 10-0. Pepper Rodgers was in his first year, and the stormy Kansas coach aroused the crowd and his players into the dramatic win. Devaney went down as he had won, gambling.

Just one week later, Nebraska dropped its second game that season, a 21-16 loss to Colorado. In recent years, the Buffs are unaccustomed to beating Nebraska, but in this game, All-American Dick Anderson, later a defensive standout with the Miami Dolphins, intercepted a Frank Patrick pass and

lateraled to teammate Mike Veeder for a 68-yard touchdown. Later in the game, Jeff Raymond intercepted a Patrick pass and returned it 67 yards. Devaney gambled on a fourth-down-and-one situation but Patrick failed to pick up the yardage. That gave Colorado the football deep in Nebraska territory and the Buffs marched in to score from the 29. Those two plays were the difference in the win, and in a nutshell, that was the Nebraska football season. Colorado went on to play in the Bluebonnet Bowl while Nebraska rebounded to wins over Texas Christian University, Iowa State and Oklahoma State.

The 6-2 Cornhuskers then invaded Columbia and lost to Missouri 10-7, the first time a Devaney team had ever lost three games in his six years of coaching. Nebraska opened the game with authority as Patrick fired a long pass to end Dennis Richnafsky and then hit Joe Orduna on a 31-yard touchdown pass as the Big Red took a 7-0 lead with just 7:30 gone in the opening period. But the game turned into a defensive one as Missouri allowed just 11 yards rushing all day. The difference in the game was a pass by Missouri quarterback Garnett Phelps with the monstrous Wayne Meylan bearing down on him. Phelps just got off the throw and receiver Jon Staggers made the grab between two defenders for the margin of victory.

Oklahoma visited Lincoln a week later and handed a Devaney-coached team its first four-loss season. Before a national television audience, Oklahoma opened an early 10-0 lead before Patrick led a 75-yard march by Nebraska and capped it with a nine-yard pass to fullback Ben Gregory. Then Nebraska followed up with an 80-yard march to take a 14-13 lead. When Oklahoma fumbled on the ensuing kickoff, it seemed some of the Irish luck that had deserted Devaney that year had returned to Memorial Stadium. Patrick fired 15 yards to end Dennis Morrison and then threw a bullet to the glue-fingered Richnafsky for a go-ahead score, but Nebraska was flagged for illegal motion. The play was the final nail in the coffin that year. Meylan played well enough to earn All-American honors for his season and running back Davis rushed for 127 yards in the game while Patrick rolled up 290 yards with 22 completions, but Oklahoma still won the game. Eddie Hinton, normally an end, took a handoff and ran 23 yards for a 21-14 Oklahoma win.

After the game, I sort of felt like the guy who got a kidney transplant from a bed-wetter. The players felt even worse.

Oklahoma went on to an Orange Bowl triumph while Nebraska sat out the bowls for the first time in six years. Two-time All-American Wayne Meylan was again named Big Eight lineman of the year and the Bay City, Mich., middle guard finished ninth in the Heisman Trophy balloting with 11 votes. Richnafsky, Bob Taucher and Davis from the offensive unit and Jim McCord, Barry Alvarez and Marv Mueller of the defense were honorable mention All-Americans. Richnafsky, Meylan, Davis and McCord were All-Big eight players while Davis also was an Academic All-American. It was another big year for honors for Nebraska players, but the holidays were more subdued across the state that year. A winning season, which would have been so welcome during the five years before Devaney joined Nebraska, was lost in the disappointment.

There really was no mystery as to why Nebraska absorbed four losses in 1967, even though each defeat had been closely contested. In 1965, the Huskers had averaged almost 35 points a game. In 1967, the scoring production had dropped to 12.7.

1968

In 1968, when Nebraska struggled to early wins over Wyoming 13-10 and Minnesota 17-14, it was apparent the Nebraska offense wasn't firing smoothly. Lloyd Eaton, a former Devaney assistant, had Wyoming motivated for the opener that year. Gene Huey, now a Nebraska coach, led Wyoming to a 10-0 lead before Nebraska recovered. Backup quarterback Ernie Sigler and Paul "The Toe" Rogers, booting a 51-yard field goal with only 21 seconds left, rallied Nebraska to the three-point win. After an easy 31-0 win against Utah, Rogers again booted a winning field goal against Minnesota, this time with just 1:32 remaining.

However, the thrilling wins hadn't instilled much momentum and many Nebraskans filling Memorial Stadium for the conference opener against Kansas were worried. A record crowd of 67,119 fans in Nebraska's expanded stadium showed up only to watch the Huskers finally pay for a struggling offense. Kansas controlled the ball for most of the final period to score two touchdowns for a come-from-behind 23-13 win. It was little solace that Kansas won the league title that year and went on to play in the Orange Bowl (losing in freakish fashion, having 12 men on the field during a punt return that went for a key touchdown.)

Missouri then went into Memorial Stadium and beat Nebraska 16-14 during a game in which the Huskers fumbled four times and lost the ball twice when Tiger punts hit NU blockers peeling back after fourth-down kicks and gave up some key yardage on a pass interference call. Luck was so bad that after the game, trainer Paul Schneider considered taking all the soap out of the shower stalls because he was afraid somebody might slip and suffer a serious fracture.

The two losses and nagging injuries had shaken the confidence of Patrick and in Stillwater, Okla., backup Ernie Sigler came off the bench to rally Nebraska to another come-from-behind win over Oklahoma State, 21-20. With Nebraska down by six, Sigler marched the Huskers 80 yards on 16 plays and threw a five-yard touchdown pass to North Platte's Jim McFarland, a reliable tight end who had been a big part of the offense all season. Roger's toe was the winning margin for the third time that season when he booted the extra point.

This was the game when I met Joe Orduna's father, sitting just two rows in front of me. John Orduna, a minister with an Omaha church, remained remarkably calm during that final touchdown drive while I thought I was going to drop dead any minute. I practically went to my knees, when Joe Orduna took the ball on a fourth-down play during the drive and simply hurled his body past a first down marker when it looked as though he had been stopped short. Noticing my weakened condition after the play, the Rev. Orduna turned to me and said, "You know, Mr. Winkler, you ought to give up these football games." That cracked up Grand Island friends Howard Wagner and Don Abraham, who had made the trip to Stillwater with me.

But I was fully-recovered for the next week when Nebraska boosted its record to 5-2 with a 24-13 win over Iowa State at Ames. Then Kansas State traveled to Lincoln the following week and handed Nebraska its biggest stunner since Devaney turned the football program around. It was a Wildcat team that hadn't accomplished much but there were some stars, including quarterback Lynn Dickey and a running back named Mack Herron. Kansas State handed Nebraska a 12-0 shutout and when I returned home, I remember Grand Islander Larry Schager telling me he got frostbite on his fingers from so many trips to the refrigerator for more medicinal spirits. I walked away from the game in such a state of shock that I left my field

glasses under my seat. Though the loss again put Nebraska out of bowl reach, Devaney fired up Nebraska for a 22-6 win the next week against Colorado.

It was about four years prior to the 1968 Oklahoma game I remember talking to Mike Wilson, then a sportswriter for the Grand Island Independent. He had told me about a Miami, Okla., high school senior, who he predicted would be a Heisman Trophy winner in his senior year. That conversation rolled through my mind many times when I watched senior fullback Steve Owens run through Nebraska all day in a 47-0 thrashing. Owens surely clinched his Heisman Trophy that day as he rushed for 172 yards and scored a record five touchdowns.

After hearing Wilson rave about the Oklahoman four years earlier, I had contacted the Nebraska coaches about Owens. The NU crew immediately put together some films on the pile-driving prepster, and Coach Mike Corgan agreed he indeed was a fine prospect. That launched an all-out recruiting effort, but Owens remained loyal to his native state. It didn't dim memories, either when Mike called me a few days after the overwhelming loss to Oklahoma.

"When was the turning point in the game?" he asked me.

"I think it was when they played the national anthem," I replied.

Actually, the game itself became a turning point for Nebraska. I've heard coach Tom Osborne, Devaney's appointed successor, give many speeches about that loss to Oklahoma. He says the Nebraska football program had stagnated with back-to-back 6-4 seasons, but it took the humiliation of a 47-0 loss on national television to jolt the coaches into the reality of the situation. While NU coaches had to recruit a different size of player after the successive Alabama bowl losses, they acquired the desire to be great in 1968. Never again, did Devaney want one of his teams to be on the losing end of a 47-0 score. The agony of such a horrible beating supplied the Nebraska coaching staff with the resolve to become nothing less than the best.



Wally Winter



Mike Green

Chapter 15

The Start of the National Champions—1969

The 1969 squad will always stand out as my favorite Nebraska team. Those are the players who built the bridge to the championship road. They were not the stars who would stand so tall just a couple of years later. They were players with grit, willing to do anything asked of them and more. They were not athletes lacking in talent, but for all their ability, they were even more widely admired for their attitudes, camaraderie and unselfishness, on and off the playing field.

This also was a year for great experiments. Devaney always enjoyed the role of an innovator, but when he started turning out national contenders each year, there was no reason to change. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," is how the old saying goes. Devaney sometimes had been criticized for staying with a pat hand, usually after one of his rare defeats. As long as he held a winning hand, he stayed with it. But in the spring and fall practices of 1969, he reshuffled the deck.

The first big move was to shift Glenn Patterson, the Worland, Wyo., star, from offensive tackle to offensive center. Tight end Paul Topliff was converted to an offensive tackle. Gale Williams, Carl Ashman, Wally Winter and others were converted into a much quicker offensive line. Williams, the product of Meadow Grove, is a good example of the caliber of athlete that was being turned into a lineman. Though he only played on an 80-yard field in eight-man football, Williams had terrorized high school foes. Ashman, who played at Burwell, and was called the best athlete in high school by Grand Island Central Catholic football coaches, was another big name athlete in high school. And in addition to the talent to play several NU positions, they had the willingness to give up those glory posts to become unheralded linemen.

With two fine sophomore quarterbacks available, Jerry Tagge and Van Brownson, Devaney took senior Frank Patrick and moved him to tight end where he alternated with Jim McFarland. Then Devaney took a look at 5 foot 9 inch Guy "The Fly" Ingles at split end and didn't do anything. Devaney

had recruited him as a split receiver and a possible punt return man as he had as fine a pair of hands as any young man they had seen. He had a "big motor" and played like a man twice his size.

Nor did Devaney see any reason to change his defensive squad which had continued to play well and keep Nebraska in football games during the previous two years. Mike Wynn and Sherwin Jarman were solid at defensive end, and Bob Liggett and sophomore Larry Jacobson, a future Outland Trophy winner, were excellent tackles. Ken Geddes had less ink than Wayne Meylan at middle guard, but he was just as solid, going on to a pro career with the Los Angeles Rams and Seattle Seahawks. Linebacker Jerry Murtaugh, my first choice for a partner if World War III breaks out, was joined by defensive backs Adrian Fiala, Al Larson, Dana Stephenson and co-captain Jim Anderson and Randy Reeves.

There were other notables. When Joe Orduna tragically was injured a week before the season opener, sophomore Jeff Kinney of McCook was moved to first-string I back. Larry Frost, the "Malcolm Mangler," was firmly entrenched at the wing back while Dan Schneiss, the Wisconsin blockbuster, and Omaha Tech speed merchant Mike Green were the fullbacks.

Off the bench came a mixture of players good enough to be starters and future greats. Future All-American lineman Bob Newton, feisty middle guard Ed Periard, Ron Drakulich, Bill Janssen, Dave Walline, Bill Kosch, Joe Buda, Paul Rogers, Bill Bomberger, Tom McClelland, Dave Mason, Gary Hollstein of Rushville and "Desperate" Dave Morock were those other names on the Nebraska depth charts.

Many of these men played as though they were starters.

It's hard to believe that this Husker team, unheralded and under-rated at the time, ever lost a game. But Nebraska lost its opener 31-21 to Southern California, which went on to a 10-0-1 season and a 10-3 Rose Bowl win over Michigan. I'll go to my death bed swearing we could have beat John McKay, quarterback Jimmy Jones and the rest of the Californians later that season, but Nebraska was still adjusting in this opener. And Southern Cal isn't the kind of team to be working out the bugs against. Still, Nebraska was trailing only 28-21 when a Big Red rusher broke in the clear only to be tackled from behind, preventing an NU touchdown. Joe Orduna, the back who would have never been caught, was on the sideline with torn-knee

cartilage. Young Jerry Tagge's touchdown pass was intercepted later in the drive with less than three minutes to play and the Trojans added a field goal. In a losing cause, Jerry Murtaugh turned in 16 tackles.

Nebraska bounced back against a very good Texas A & M squad the next week. The Blackshirts limited the Aggies to just 35 yards rushing in the 14-0 win. Soph signal callers Tagge and Brownson alternated while McFarland caught seven passes for 117 yards, including a sliding grab of a 42-yard aerial.

Against Minnesota, led by a bulldozing fullback named Jim Carter and NU recruiting escapee, Ray Parsons (who was a star end at McCook Junior College under coach Rex Grossart), Nebraska faced its third straight tough opponent. Wyoming, South Dakota and North Dakota had slipped off the schedule. The Gophers led twice in the first half, but Nebraska tied the game 14-14 at the half and then just exploded in a 42-14 win.

Tagge set a total offense record of 301 yards and hit 15 of 23 passes for 219 yards. That easily surpassed the total offense record by John Bordogna of 264 yards against Iowa State in 1951, and tied by Frank Patrick against Oklahoma in 1967. On defense Ken Geddes turned in 14 tackles, including three key third-down stops.

But the next week, on a rain-soaked field in Columbia, Nebraska took its second loss of the year, 17-7 from Missouri. The rain just seemed to fall heavier on Nebraska's side of scrimmage. When Missouri quarterback Terry McMillan nearly slipped while dropping back to pass, defender Jimmy Anderson started forward for a tackle. The hesitation gave speedster Mel Gray time to get a step on the NU defender and the future St. Louis Cardinal speedster outraced Anderson to the end zone on a 69-yard bomb. It was the only time I ever saw the ever-alert Husker defender ever beaten on a play. Jeff Kinney took a Tagge pass 77 yards to cut a Missouri lead to 14-7 later in the game, and Nebraska had a chance to tie when Tagge floated a long aerial to a streaking Larry Frost, only to have the football be inches over his outstretched hands. Missouri added a field goal to put the game out of reach.

Coach Devaney told his players to forget about the defeat and Nebraska's 2-2 record. He said he was certain that the Big Eight Conference champion would end up losing at least one game that year and Nebraska could still determine its own fate that season. "Okay, now we've lost our one game, let's go all

the way," he urged his players. And that's exactly what his team did.

It wasn't easy, however. Kansas, the Orange Bowl representative the year before, had most of its players back and was a tough match the next week in Memorial Stadium. The Blackshirts held Kansas on its own 12 late in the fourth quarter, the key in a 21-17 Nebraska win. Nebraska was down three points in the game and another score would have put the game out of reach. But Nebraska moved the ball 88 yards, to score with 1:22 left in the game.

A week later, Nebraska throttled Oklahoma State 13-3. Guy Ingles showed why he played first string ahead of much larger football players by grabbing a 47-yarder from Tagge that took everyone's breath away. It was one of the greatest catches I've ever seen. Against Colorado, Dana Stephenson looked like an outfielder on defense, nabbing three interceptions in a 20-7 win. Then the Blackshirts threw Iowa State quarterback Obert Tisdale for 86 yards in losses in a 17-3 win as Nebraska pushed its seasonal record to 6-2.



Dana Stephenson — "It's tough to be humble when you look like this."

Nebraska, bracing for a rematch with awesome Oklahoma, found itself in a dogfight, one week early, in Manhattan. These weren't the normal Wildcats. Coach Vince Gibson, who after watching crowds of up to 15,000 follow Nebraska to Manhattan, once told Devaney, "Just once, I'd like to play you at home." As usual, Nebraska filled out the new Wildcat Stadium with a sea of red but behind quarterback Lynn Dickey and runner Mack Herron, Gibson also had developed a loyal following which he called "The Purple Pride."

Kansas State opened the game with an 80-yard march for a 7-0 lead and for the first time, soph quarterback Jerry Tagge went into a slump. In the third quarter, Devaney brought Van Brownson off the bench and he drove Nebraska deep enough for Paul Rogers to boot his record-tying sixth field goal of the season. But Nebraska didn't go ahead until midway into the fourth quarter when Dan Schneiss broke loose on a 34-yard run to the K-State 14 and moments later caught a 12-yard touchdown pass. The Wildcats weren't through yet. KFAB broadcaster Lyell Bremser and sidekick Dave Blackwell warned Nebraska listeners to brace for more action than they had seen in the entire game. Sure enough, Dickey moved the ball downfield, throwing mostly to the elusive Herron. Al Larson made one of the greatest defensive plays of the game as he leaped high in the air to bat down a Dickey bullet but co-captain Dana Stephenson made the play of the year when he corralled Herron deep in N.U. territory and held him, with the authority of a bull-doing cowhand, and prevented him from getting out of bounds and stopping the clock, allowing the Wildcats to go for a possible game tying field goal or even a winning touchdown.

The win over Kansas State left Nebraska with a 7-2 season record and only one loss in the Big Eight Conference. Devaney's prediction after the Nebraska loss to Missouri, five weeks earlier had been uncanny. Everyone in the conference had at least one loss. That meant Nebraska, which had been 2-2 early in the season, now could tie for the Big Eight Conference championship. Of course, all they had to do was beat Oklahoma, the team which had annihilated Nebraska 47-0 the year before at Owen Field. Some naive Nebraska fans wondered if the field hadn't been named after Steve Owens, the fullback who had scored five times in that slaughter.

On a dusty and windy afternoon in Norman, Oklahoma,



Al Larson — “The Sioux City Sensation”

the 1969 Cornhuskers showed the nation they were a team of the future. It wasn't as easy as the score would later show, but Nebraska ripped Oklahoma 44-14. The Huskers, stopped deep in their own territory, had to kick into the wind on the opening possession of the game and the punt only made it out to the Cornhusker 18. Nebraska fans hadn't even had time to sample their game snacks when Sooner quarterback Jack Mildren scored on a wishbone keeper that had many thinking they were watching a re-run of the 1968 game. But after finding themselves deep in their own territory once again, Nebraska responded with a magnificent 94-yard drive to tie the score. Once the game was tied, the balance of the battle shifted to the Cornhuskers. Jeff Kinney scored three touchdowns and passed for a fourth while rushing for 127 yards. Brownson and Tagge both were sharp at quarterback and Nebraska rolled to the astounding 44-14 win. The defense held All-American and Heisman Trophy winner Steve Owens to just 71 yards and no touchdowns. It was the first time in 17 games that Owens had failed to rush for 100 yards.

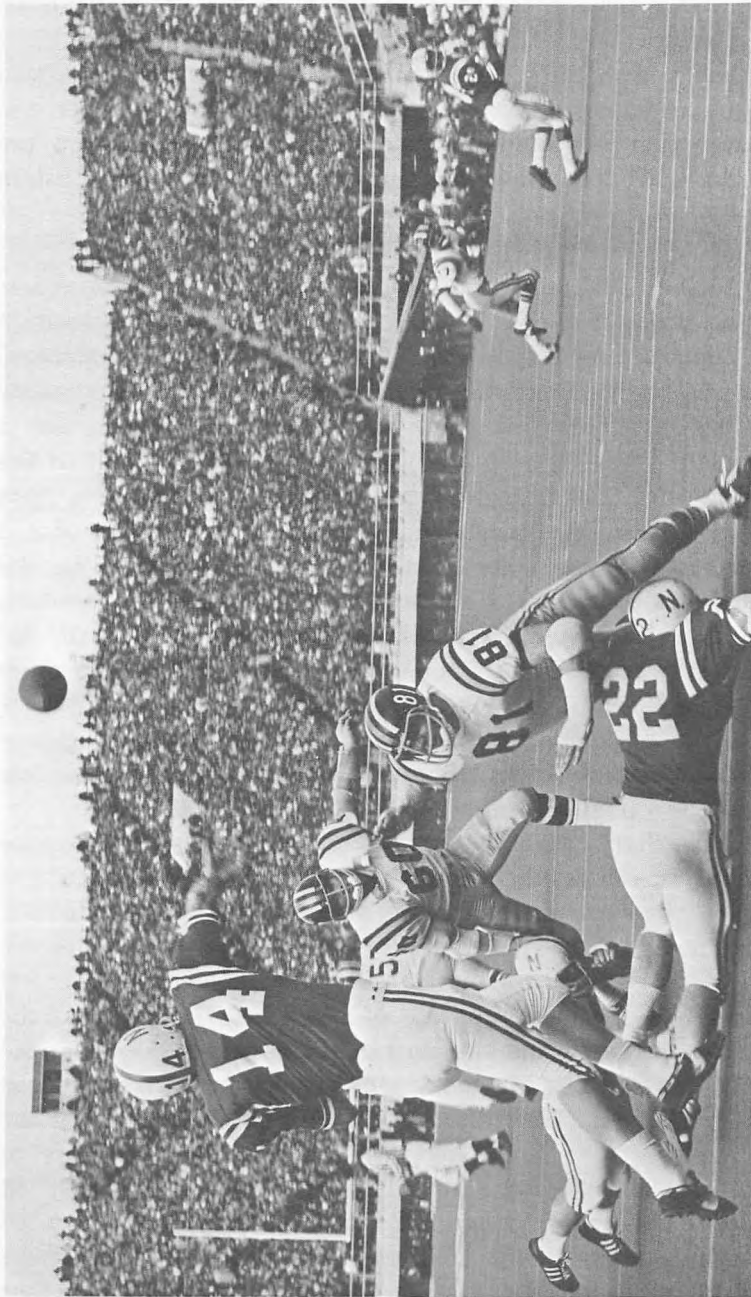
The win enabled a lightly-taken Cornhusker squad to share the Big Eight Conference championship with Missouri. Because the Tigers had won the game that season between the two schools, it was Missouri which headed for the Orange Bowl in Miami while Nebraska hoped for a lesser bowl bid. An offer

came from El Paso, Tex., to play in the Sun Bowl and Devaney knew his football program was on the road back. Of that season, Don Bryant, the indomitable Nebraska Sports Information Director, said, "When historians refer to the 1969 Big Eight Football season, they'll note that Missouri and Nebraska tied for the championship. But they should dig a bit deeper and discover that the play of the Cornhuskers bordered on the phenomenal." Yes, when the beloved "Fat Fox" talks, I listen.

Sun Bowl

In the Oklahoma game, the Cornhuskers had come of age. Nobody knew it at the time, but this forgotten football team in the 1969 season would be a two-time national champion. Georgia, the Sun Bowl opponent, had to be the first to realize the fury of Nebraska's newly found power. The game was a mismatch. Paul Rogers literally kicked the Bulldogs out of the stadium with four field goals in the first quarter, ranging from 32 to 50 yards, a school and Big Eight record. It was played before 7,000 loyal Nebraskans who were rejoicing with the Cornhuskers' return to the bowl days. This is the game in which Devaney told his players in the locker room, "Boys, half the state of Nebraska is out there cheering for you and the other half is back home praying for you. Let's go get them." Jerry Murtaugh was named the outstanding defensive player in the game and Rogers the outstanding offensive player for his fine kicking. The final score was 45-6, Nebraska.

Dana Stephenson was named an All-American at defensive back that season while Jim McFarland was second-team at tight end. Stephenson was joined by middle guard Ken Geddes, linebacker Jerry Murtaugh, tight end McFarland and defensive tackle Bob Liggett on the All-Big Eight Team. I-back Jeff Kinney was named sophomore of the year. This also was the year that Ed Weir, the two-time All-American tackle from the 1920's, was named at tackle to the nation's All-American Centennial Team. Weir took his place along side some of the nation's greats — Red Grange of Illinois, Ernie Nevers of Stanford, Don Hutson of Alabama, Bronco Nagurski of Minnesota, Sammy Baugh of TCU and Tom Harmon of Michigan, among others. Weir was a reminder of some of the great moments in Nebraska football history. Little did fans realize, the greatest Cornhusker football moments ever lived were just a season away.



Jerry Tagge to Johnny Rodgers

Chapter 16

The First National Title—1970

The 1970 football season started on a calm if optimistic note. Coaches didn't know how good the Cornhuskers would be that season but they liked the looks of the depth chart. The name that first stood out was Johnny Rodgers, a promising sophomore from Omaha who had sports fans talking in the off-season.

But Rodgers was accompanied from Jim Ross' freshmen team by other top athletes — fullback Bill Olds, defensive backs Joe Blahak, John O'Connell and running backs Randy Butts and Dave Goeller; quarterbacks Steve Runty and Max Linder; defensive linemen Monte Johnson and John Dutton; a glue-fingered receiver from Scottsbluff named Frosty Anderson; future All-American Rich Glover, then a prospective tackle, and Daryl White at offensive tackle. Junior College transfers included some top offensive linemen in Dick Rupert, Carl Johnson and Keith Wortman, as well as wide receiver Woody Cox. A new defensive addition was transfer Bob Terrio, moved over from fullback. All would make their significant mark on Nebraska football. This freshmen team and Junior College transfers, probably the best ever, were ready for the big time.

There had been some losses from the 1969 team. But many of the players from that magnificent team were back, including Kinney and quarterbacks Tagge and Brownson. Joe Orduna, who had almost been forgotten since his knee injury, was back to full strength.

The talent-rich Cornhuskers started the season with an easy 36-12 home opener against Wake Forest. One of the touchdowns was a 61-yard pass reception by Johnny Rodgers which had fans buzzing. I watched his electrifying run with Grand Island C.P.A. William (Bud) Cline, who has never forgiven me for that day. Prior to the pass play, I told Bud to train his field glasses on Dumler at center as I was wondering how he was controlling the play at the line of scrimmage. Bud studied Dumler's blocking intently on the next snap and watched a very fine blocking exhibition but missed one of the

most exciting plays of the year. Needless to say, he refuses to sit with me anymore.

Nebraska, meanwhile, left the state to travel to Los Angeles for an early season showdown with Southern California. The Trojans, just off an 11-0-1 season and a Rose Bowl win, were one of the teams being targeted for a national championship that year. The game was played at night before 73,768 fans and the approximate million Nebraska fans who had to stay home were glued to their radio broadcast of the Big Red, entering the contest as two-touchdown underdogs.

The game was a classic struggle between two titans. It included powering ground drives and big plays and a dramatic finish. The most memorable run in the game was a 67-yard breakaway gem by Joe Orduna, keyed from a block by fullback Dan Schneiss. Many Nebraska fans, accustomed to listening to Omaha radio announcer Lyell Bremser say "Man, woman and child!" after such a moment, only heard a long silence after this touchdown. I recorded the game and each time I replay the tape I'm surprised at the length of the pause that followed the Orduna run. Lyell never explained it either, but I'm sure that there were many Nebraskans that night who worried that Bremser might have passed on to the great "Broadcast Booth in the Sky." I remember getting so excited after this electrifying run that my wife cried "You're crazy!" I said, "I want a second opinion." She replied, "Okay — you're ugly, too!"

That run by Orduna had put Nebraska ahead 21-14 in the game and only a bad snap from center kept kicker Paul Rogers from putting the Cornhuskers ahead 24-14 in the final quarter. But Southern California marched back down the field to tie the game 21-21 and that's the way the game ended when a 50-yard desperation toss by Southern Cal fell incomplete as the game ended.

In the game, Rodgers scored his second touchdown as a Cornhusker on a 15-yard pass from Tagge. The game was sort of a homecoming for Rodgers, whose father once lived just a few blocks from the Coliseum. The other score in the win was on a 17-yard fullback pass by Dan Schneiss to end Guy Ingles, a new wrinkle in the Devaney offense.

This was the game in which defensive coach Monte Kiffin was asked if a tie really was like kissing his sister. "If this is like kissing a sister, she's some sister!" Kiffin told reporters. At the time, some Nebraska fans were concerned that the tie had put

the Cornhuskers out of the national title picture. Later the game proved to be an asset when sports writers that year tried to sort out the best team in the nation.

Nebraska returned home the next week to play a stubborn Army team. Though the Cornhuskers were slow to score in the game they shut out the Cadets 28-0. Making his first appearance of the season, quarterback Van Brownson drilled a 31-yard scoring pass to Woody Cox.

Then Nebraska journeyed to Minneapolis where a Devaney team mastered the Gophers for the seventh straight year in a 35-10 win. Nebraska put together seven long drives and rolled up more than 400 yards as a stunned North Country crowd of 52,287 watched in silence. The tables had been turned on the college that had been so terrorizing to Nebraska for so many years.

Once again, Nebraska opened its conference season against Missouri and the two defending co-champions were locked in a defensive struggle. The score was 7-7 when Brownson engineered a 91-yard drive in the final quarter that included a 41-yard run by Orduna. This had to be one of the finest, most gritty runs I've ever seen. The Omaha flash was straining every muscle to make it to the double stripe. On this run, George Boosalis, the Grand Island restaurant owner, made the remark that "About one more run like that, Wink, and they're going to carry both of us out." One of the highlights of the game was a tremendous hit by Dave Walline, the Husker tackle on the Tiger ace ball carrier, Joe Moore. It rivaled some of the tremendous hits of the great Tom Novak, shaking the stadium and retiring the talented Missouri ace to the sidelines for most of the season.

Kansas proved to be a much easier victim though Cornhuskers wryly recalled that Bobby Douglas had led the Jayhawks to a 10-0 lead over Nebraska in 1967. Once again Kansas jumped to a 20-10 lead over the wary Huskers but quarter Van Brownson passed 80 yards to Guy Ingles and then led a 73-yard drive that put Nebraska ahead 24-20 at the half. Devaney reset the game plan in the locker room and Nebraska came out and took control for a 41-20 win.

For once, Nebraska found Oklahoma State a soft touch and won 65-31 before the second-largest crowd assembled in Memorial Stadium. While the offense amassed 545 yards, Devaney cleared his bench of reserves.

In Boulder, against CU, Brownson threw two early passes



Dave Walline — “The tackle heard all over the stadium”

to Ingles and Paul Rogers booted a 46-yard field goal as Nebraska took a 15-7 lead into the third quarter. But upset-minded Colorado pulled back within 15-13 before a national television audience, only to miss a two-point conversion try that would have tied the score. That was the turning point and Nebraska went on to win 29-13.

The showdown of the season that year was against Kansas State, an unlikely powerhouse. Most often, Kansas State fans drifted through a football season expecting their team to be the conference doormat and then enjoy revenge during the basketball season. But Vince Gibson had tried hard to make Manhattan a more menacing place for some of the Big Eight football giants. Gibson had just missed upsetting Nebraska in 1969, absorbing a disappointing 10-7 loss. Lynn Dickey was at his finest in 1970 and his mighty arm was expected to be a severe test for the Nebraska secondary.

Earlier in the season, the press had asked co-captain and linebacker Jerry Murtaugh about defending the tricky Dickey. The tough Omaha linebacker remarked that Dickey didn't scare him a bit since no quarterback could throw very well if he was lying on his back. But Dan Schneiss, the other co-captain standing nearby, took control of the interview. "Look, you just stand around and look handsome and let me do the talking," he said as he winked at Murtaugh. "We don't want their coach to have any quotes to hang on the locker room wall."

Murtaugh lived up to his prediction of what would happen to the All-Conference quarterback, however. The game became known as the "demolition of Dickey" as Murtaugh intercepted a pass on the first series of plays in the game and from there on the contest was a Nebraska rout. The Cornhuskers amassed 361 yards total offense against the best defense in the conference. Meanwhile, the Nebraska defense intercepted seven Dickey passes. I-back Joe Orduna scored four touchdowns and the conference showdown turned into a 51-13 waltz.



Jerry Murtaugh — "Maybe the best since Novak."

I had traveled to Lincoln the day before the Kansas State showdown to watch Dave Humm and the Nebraska frosh team rout the K-State yearlings 63-29. However, in packing for my overnight stay, I had neglected to include my red socks which I faithfully wore for luck to every Nebraska game. I immediately placed a call to my wife back in Grand Island to explain what had happened. Unsympathetically, she replied she had noticed they were shopworn and the socks had found their way to the trash can. I admonished her to locate them at all costs and get them to me. Up until game time, I kept Omahan Chuck Seckman and daughter Debby amused in the parking lot as I asked every Grand Island fan who passed by if they had brought my "Good Luck" socks. Fortunately, the red pair I had quickly purchased the night before served me well as we "socked" it to the Wildcats. I started a new string of wins with them.

Oklahoma, not Kansas State, turned out to be the final test for Nebraska. The Sooners, switching to the new wishbone offense, had started slowly but became more powerful with each game that year. By the end of the season, Chuck Fairbanks' Boomer Sooners were a formidable obstacle to Nebraska's first unbeaten regular season since 1963. Quarterback Jack Mildren ran in the game's first score but trusty bombardier Jerry Tagge hit Johnny Rodgers on a 53-yarder to quickly tie the game. Speedster Joe Wylie scored on a 37-yard run to put Oklahoma back in front, but Joe Orduna scored just before the half to tie the game 14-14. Then Tagge threw a 13-yard pass to Guy Ingles to put Nebraska ahead for the first time in the nail-biter, only to have Oklahoma tie the game at 21-21. But the determined Huskers forged a 53-yard drive and Tagge stretched over the goal on a one-yard quarterback sneak to win the game 28-21. Oklahoma marched down field in the waning seconds, but Jimmy Anderson intercepted a Sooner pass in the end zone to reserve his teammates a ticket to the Orange Bowl.

Orange Bowl

There were some strange parallels between the 1971 Orange Bowl and the one Nebraska played in 1966. Once again Nebraska was rated the No. 3 team in the nation, this time behind unbeaten Texas and Ohio State. Once again, Big Red players and fans stayed out of the Miami sun on New Year's Day in favor of dark motel rooms or bars to watch the outcome

of the other games. On New Year's Eve, I had gone to Orange Bowl stadium with my wife and two daughters and Omaha friends as the Huskers went through their dress rehearsal. As I looked onto the cool turf and empty bleachers, I realized it was going to be a long night and day's wait for battle with Louisiana State. As time crawled by the next day and as the emotion of the game gnawed at my stomach, good news rolled in from other parts of the country. In a grudge match, the fourth-ranked Fighting Irish of Notre Dame traveled to the Cotton Bowl and upended Texas. In even a more unlikely upset, unheralded Stanford turned back Ohio State. Once again the stage had been cleared and Nebraska had the opportunity to be the national champion.

Even as the Rose Bowl was still being played, our party left our motel room for the Orange Bowl. Reports of the game came over the car radio. Woody Hayes and his Buckeyes were clinging to a 17-13 lead over Stanford but the great Jim Plunkett was moving his squad down the field. At the stadium we learned from a faint signal on a transistor radio that Stanford had taken a 20-17 lead. Then the public address system announced that Stanford had beaten Ohio State 27-17 and the stadium erupted. But memories of Nebraska's last Orange Bowl trip had me worrying. Would history repeat itself at the Big Red's expense? That was a question I was afraid to ask the jubilant friends around me, and before the kickoff I felt about as lonely as the young lady who put her bra on backwards and it fit.

The whole game hinged on LSU's defense, reputed to be the best in the nation that year. The questions were how many points Nebraska could score and would they be enough to win? The Big Red put my mind to ease by scoring quickly, on a 25-yard field goal by Paul Rogers and then on a three-yard run by Orduna. After a 10-0 first-quarter lead, I was happy. But the game was not to be won so easily. The Baton Rouge Bengals tightened their defense and brought Nebraska's offensive attack to a complete standstill, buying time for their own offense. By halftime, Mark Lumkin booted a field goal to cut the lead 10-3.

Early in the third quarter, Lumkin added another field goal to cut the Nebraska lead to four points. Meanwhile, each yard became tougher to come by for the Big Red offense. Time after time, Nebraska surrendered the football on a punt and I wondered how many times the Blackshirts would be called on

to take a stand. Then late in the period, quarterback Buddy Lee fired a 31-yard touchdown pass to receiver Al Coffee. Lumkin's kick failed but Nebraska went into the final quarter on the short end of a 12-10 score.

For part of the fourth quarter, the game was fought to a standstill. Neither offense could move. But then quarterback Jerry Tagge and teammates chiseled out a 67-yard march and the Green Bay lad never looked more like a boy from "Title Town, USA," than when he stretched his long arms over the goal line from the one for a 17-12 Nebraska lead. I died a thousand times in the next six minutes, but linebacker Bob Terrio intercepted an LSU pass near midfield and the whole world knew Nebraska was No. 1.

Nebraskans hugged each other and players carried the smiling Irishman from Michigan off the field in his finest hour. From all over the stadium red-clad Nebraskans descended on the Husker dressing room while the band played the school's fight song. Cheerleaders and fans screamed out their lungs in a continuous chant of "We're No. 1!" Any person not proud to be a Nebraskan that night might as well have dug a hole and pulled the dirt in after him.

A blizzard hit the state on Jan. 2, delaying the team's triumphant return to Lincoln by a day. It was a day Coach Devaney spent lobbying for something his players already had won, a national title. But the Associated Press ratings weren't to be announced until a few days later and Notre Dame's Ara Parseghian was claiming Notre Dame should be the champion for knocking Texas from its No. 1 rating. "Even the Pope would vote Nebraska for No. 1!" Devaney countered to reporters, a quote carried in the papers nationwide. Devaney was sure the Huskers would get the nod, but he also knew Notre Dame, with its time-honored legends, was a press favorite. And he knew the board of sports writers was titled in favor of the heavily-populated east where Notre Dame, not Nebraska, was the household word for college football.

The voting was close enough, but Nebraska had won its first national title ever! A Nebraska team hadn't been undefeated since 1915. It was a warm glow that carried Nebraskans through that cold winter and early in the spring, Richard Nixon, then President of the United States, came to Lincoln and spoke to 8,000 students where he presented the national championship plaque to Coach Bob Devaney and

co-captains Dan Schneiss and Jerry Murtaugh. The plaque read: "The University of Nebraska, 1970 Football Team . . . Champions of the Big Eight Conference . . . Victors in the 1971 Orange Bowl . . . The Associated Press No. 1 Team in the Nation."

MORE HONORS

There were other honors for the 11-0-1 Huskers. Offensive lineman Bob Newton and linebacker Bob Terrio were named All-Americans. Honorable mention went to Guy Ingles, Joe Orduna, Johnny Rodgers, Donnie McGhee, Van Brownson, Jerry Tagge, Willie Harper, Dave Walline and Joe Blahak. Rodgers and Harper also were chosen as Football News Sophomore All-Americans. Jerry Murtaugh was chosen as the Big Eight player of the year. Harper was chosen as the league's sophomore player of the year. Tagge and Harper were named the outstanding offensive and defensive players of the Orange Bowl.



Coach Devaney — "If there was water here — I'd walk on it too."



President Nixon presenting National Championship plaque to Coach Devaney and team.

Chapter 17

The Perfect Season—13-0—1971

There have been three unbeaten seasons at the University of Nebraska, not counting the 1890 season when Nebraska won the only two games it played against Omaha YMCA and Doane College. In 1902, Bummy Booth led Nebraska to a 10-0 season, though there were some easy opponents, including one high school team. In 1915, Jumbo Stiehm's squad piled up an 8-0 record when football still was a truly amateur sport. The third perfect season (13-0) came in 1971. In the span of more than half a century, America had fought in two world wars, man learned to transmit pictures across the world and landed a man on the moon and college football grew into a massive social phenomenon. Each season was perfect but never was it so difficult for a team to be perfect than in the era of modern football.

It was an autumn filled with color, tradition and optimism. For several years now, Nebraska fans had begun the ritual of wearing red clothing to their football games. Many carried helium-filled red balloons which they released in the stadium after each Nebraska touchdown. There is nothing like a Saturday morning in Lincoln in the fall, but 1971 was a special year. Nebraskans from all over the state — as far as 450 miles away — could be found roaming the streets of downtown Lincoln, shaking hands with old friends and making new ones. The chatter was folksy and optimistic. And never was there a year when so many Nebraskans were so excited or proud of a football team.

The one thing that points out the Nebraska football spirit is when I asked a good old die-hard Cornhusker fan about how he felt having his real estate taxes, his income taxes and his football ticket billings all coming due at nearly the same time each year. The fan admitted he had a cash flow problem but when I asked if it was too much to handle, he quickly replied, "Heck, no! I pay for my tickets first. They can always take my home or even put me in jail for income tax evasion — but I won't give up my tickets!" This is the true Cornhusker spirit indeed!

The National Champion Huskers had lost their great running back Joe Orduna and wide receiver Guy Ingles to graduation. Also gone was All-American linebacker Jerry Murtaugh and defensive standouts Dave Walline, Ed Periard and Dave Morock. The offensive line lost tackles All-American Bob Newton and his running mate Wally Winter. Also, Nebraska faced the very difficult task of repeating as a national champion. But newcomers to the squad from Nebraska's freshmen program easily offset the graduation losses. The backfield was led by highly-recruited David Humm of Las Vegas. There were rumors the slinging southpaw was ready to play now and too good to be redshirted. There was talk that either Van Brownson or Jerry Tagge would lay out a year in deference to Humm. Meanwhile, fullback Maury Damkroger of Lincoln Northeast, wingback Glen Garson of California and running back Donnie Westbrook of Cheyenne, Wyoming, who had made the 1970 freshmen backfield a wrecking crew, had all moved up to the varsity.

As autumn drew closer the questions to Devaney persisted. Would there be a change at quarterback? Devaney graciously sidestepped the issue by joking that he would have to check the status of his freshman assistant coach, Jim Walden, who had been his signal caller at Wyoming. The likeable Walden, who is now head coach at Washington State, kidded the press by saying he was going to ask for a red shirt year.

Plenty of quips and a steady pace formed the tactics the Nebraska coaches used in handling the increasing pressures before the 1971 football season. As national champion, the football team was in the public eye. Large newspapers such as the New York Times, Washington Post and Los Angeles Times were running large stories on the Huskers each week. National sports magazines such as *Sports Illustrated* focused on the Huskers. Network television kept viewers across the country up-to-date on Nebraska's football fortunes. Memorial Stadium had become a fishbowl for the world to see. It was up to the Nebraska coaches to keep their players under control and thinking about football amidst all the national attention. The coaches did it by implementing the old cliché, "one game at a time." That year Devaney was the master of always making the next week's opponent sound like the toughest one of the schedule and this is no easy task.

Oregon State 34-7

Heisman Trophy candidate Bobby Moore, now known as wide receiver Ahmad Rashad in the N.F.L., led the Oregon Ducks into Memorial Stadium for the season opener in 1971. The team was quarterbacked by Dan Fouts, now a pretty fair country quarterback with the San Diego Chargers. There was talk the Ducks would be the surprise of the Pacific Eight Conference and were in the running for a Rose Bowl bid.

Nebraska, however, controlled the game from the start. I-back Jeff Kinney won the dual of the running backs by rushing for 124 yards and scoring a touchdown. Gary Dixon, a junior college transfer from Ventura, Calif., scored three touchdowns and Grand Island's Randy Butts added the other score. While sophomore Dave Humm sat on the bench, starting a red shirt year; Jerry Tagge hit eight of 10 throws for 98 yards.

Minnesota 35-7

Nebraska was shooting for its 21st win without a defeat against the Gophers when Husker fans filed into Memorial Stadium for the second of four straight home openers. The Big Red troops succeeded by beating a now declining Minnesota team for the eighth straight time.

Jerry Tagge had a strong day throwing to rack up 233 yards in total offense and tie Bob Churchich's 1966 passing mark. Johnny Rodgers, on the catching end of many of the throws, tied the 1921 receiving record held by Clarence Swanson.

Texas A & M 34-7

The visiting Aggies gave Nebraska its toughest game to date, but Nebraska turned in some big scoring plays to keep the game from upset range. Fullback Bill Olds lumbered for a 67-yard touchdown run while Johnny Rodgers opened everyone's eyes with a 98-yard kickoff return to open the second half. Bill Kosch intercepted a pass and returned it 95 yards for a score as Nebraska moved to a 34-0 lead in the fourth quarter.

Utah State 42-6

In the easiest Nebraska win yet, Jerry Tagge threw for a pair of touchdowns and Van Brownson fired another to Frosty Anderson. After the third quarter, fans were filing out of the stadium happy with yet another triumph.

Missouri 36-0

Nebraska had to open its conference season on the road at Missouri, and experts figured this game would provide the first true test of the Huskers. Nebraska showed the nation it was awesome. The offense amassed 603 yards, including 334 on the ground and 269 in the air. Missouri's most significant accomplishment in the game was to hold the Huskers scoreless in the first quarter.

The win put Nebraska on top in the football ratings. But another Big Eight team, Oklahoma, was dazzling the nation with its wishbone offensive machine, and also was moving to the top of the college football rankings. Already the nation knew there was to be a showdown of giants by the season's end.

Kansas 55-0

Nebraska won its 25th straight game with only a tie against Southern Cal a year earlier to mar the string. The Blackshirts held the Jayhawks to a minus 42 yards rushing and 56 in total offense.

Jeff Kinney and Gary Dixon each collected 104 yards rushing while Tagge hit 10 of 18 passes for 108 yards. The game was particularly rewarding for Nebraska assistant coach Clete Fischer. His son Pat, now head football coach at Hastings High School, intercepted a pass and returned it 14 yards for a touchdown in the win.

Colorado 31-7

Colorado appeared a team to test the 7-0 Huskers, so national television invaded Memorial Stadium to watch the expected showdown. A steady drizzle kept the ball wet during the game and the astroturf had to be squeegeed before the game and at the half. But the drab day did little to stop the Big Red juggernaut.

Jeff Kinney gained 81 yards while Tagge hit 10 of 17 passes for 144 yards in the win. The real stars, though, were on defense. A Colorado team loaded with future pro stars was held to just 108 yards rushing, 52 yards passing and a broken-play touchdown.

After the game, Coach Eddie Crowder told the press he was afraid the Nebraska defense might line up at the airport and prevent his team's plane from taking off.



Jerry Tagge

Iowa State 37-0

The temperature dropped to near freezing and a cold wind followed the next week, but Nebraska hearts were warmed by 19 seniors who made their final appearance at Memorial Stadium. Johnny Rodgers returned another punt 62 yards while Rich Sanger kicked three field goals in the win. On defense, the Blackshirts held the Cyclones to 65 yards rushing and 40 passing.

The game was the 28th without a defeat for Nebraska and the No. 1 Huskers were 5-0 in the Big Eight. By now, most of the press was a buildup for the game between Oklahoma and Nebraska. It already was being called "The Game of the Century."

Kansas State 44-17

The only problem for the Nebraska football team about meeting a weakened Kansas State program in Manhattan was that the game still had to be played. Devaney brooded all week, worried that his players might look past the Wildcats.

But Tagge kept his mind on Kansas State and not Oklahoma, becoming the first Husker to ever pass the 5,000-yard mark in total offense. He threw 10 times to All-American Johnny Rodgers, including two for touchdowns.

The Game of The Century

"This Year's Game of the Decade" was how *Sports Illustrated* writer Dan Jenkins described the showdown between Nebraska and Oklahoma. The hoopla before and after the game is something Nebraska will never forget. Even today, fans across the state will ask each other, where were you when they played the Game of the Century? Most Nebraskans were at home watching it on national television because the game was in Norman, Oklahoma. On Thanksgiving Day it was played before a record 55 million viewers.

All week long Devaney tried to downplay the importance of the game. "There are seven billion Chinese who don't care which side wins," he told the press. He knew this was one time he would not have to motivate his players. This was one time Devaney had to make sure his players weren't overprepared. But talk about the game was on the lips of every Nebraskan and Oklahoman. A radio station in Oklahoma fed information about the game into a computer and concluded the Sooners would win. Fans wondered if Nebraska's awesome defense could stop the Oklahoma wishbone. Jenkins, of *Sports Illustrated*, wrote:

History tells us a few things we might expect from Nebraska and Oklahoma. For instance, it is a good bet that the game will be exciting, full of suspense. The home field seems to mean little, since the visitors have won as many Games of the Decade as they have lost. Nor does being a favorite mean much, since the underdogs have won half the time. The most revealing fact of all is that the team that is most reliant on the forward pass tends to lose. This could be taken as a bad omen for Nebraska. But it also is true that the team that wins the biggie usually does it with the aid of the pass — somewhere, somehow.

Nebraska entered the game with a 10-0 record and a No. 1 ranking. Oklahoma was 9-0 and No. 2. Nebraska led the nation in all the defense statistics. Oklahoma led the nation in all the offensive ones except passing. Television highlights showed the Nebraska defensive stars — Rich Glover, Willie Harper, Larry Jacobson and others — making crunching sacks behind the line of scrimmage. Then they showed the awesome wishbone backfield of Jack Mildren, All-American Greg Pruitt, Joe Wylie and Leon Crosswhite making phenomenal runs. Big Sooner linemen were shown crushing opposing defensive backs on downfield blocks.

Nebraska coaches took no chances about the trip into football-crazed Okie country and brought the team's own food and drinking water. Trainer Paul Schneider took personal charge of watching the food and water and guarded it like Ft. Knox.

One of the largest press contingents ever assembled also invaded Norman. Nebraskans traveling south were angered when they went past closed gas stations that had signs posted, reading "Johnny Rodgers was here." This, no doubt, referred to an alleged service station hold-up that Rodgers was accused of after his sophomore year. My daughter, Rebecca, not the most ardent football fan, was visibly ill by the time the game started.

My wife, I'm sorry to say, had "laid down the law" and informed me that she was having a family Thanksgiving Dinner at our place and that there would be no journeying to the game at Norman. After making a hasty analysis of what my alimony and support payments would be on four children, I decided I would watch the game on T.V.

It is sort of a custom with my wife and me to bring in some Senior Citizen from a rest home for Thanksgiving Dinner to sort of share some holiday warmth. This day was no exception and a beautiful 87-years-young woman came to share a little hospitality. Of course, when my wife asked her, she had forgotten about this game, so we tried to get the meal over with as early as possible.

When the game started I was joined by my son, Chuck and his friend Brad Rank. When Johnny Rodgers made his electrifying punt return early in the first quarter, we were jumping up in our TV room and screaming so loud that this little woman was almost scared to death. She started shaking with fright and it took constant assurances by my wife to convince her that my son and I weren't escapees from a mental institution or were people possessed.

During the game, it seemed we were jinxed. Every time my son Chuck went to the bathroom it seemed Oklahoma would score a touchdown on a long pass. Finally, to turn our luck around, I made him take my little Panasonic battery-pack television set with him — which broke the hex.

I remember unhooking the phone so I couldn't be bothered by frantic fans but one of my teenage daughters had to make a call to some friend and forgot to unplug it from the wall jack. At the halftime an anti-Nebraska fan called me and asked me what I thought now? I was quick to reply, the darned game isn't over yet. I told him not to forget the old saying, "We haven't begun to fight yet". I couldn't remember who said it but if this was to happen now, I would have to give Billy Martin the credit for it.

Naturally it was one of my disappointments not to have witnessed this great game, but I had a strange feeling I would have come home in a Pine Box and as my wife remarked, "Transporting your body over two state lines would have been quite expensive." In fact, every time my wife doesn't get her way, she is quick to remind me that if things don't go better she is going to have my body cremated, but instead of scattering me over Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, she is going to have my ashes dumped over Oklahoma's Owen Field. I would face eternity with Barry Switzer spitting on me every day.

Such super showdowns seldom live up to the advance billing, but this one did. The game was barely 3½ minutes old when Johnny Rodgers made the most immortal run in Nebraska football history. He fielded an Oklahoma punt on his own 28 and then slipped through a wall of Sooner defenders and ran 72 yards for the game's first score. "It was one of those insanely thrilling things in which a single player, seized by the moment, twists, swirls, slips, holds his balance, and sprinting, makes it all the way to the goal line," *Sports Illustrated* reported. "And afterward, back on the Nebraska bench, he did what most everybody in Norman, Oklahoma, probably felt like doing; he threw up."

Rodgers fielded the punt from Oklahoma's Joe Wylie and never considered a fair catch though Greg Pruitt was practically on top of him at the time of the catch. Pruitt hit Rodgers full force but the hit by Pruitt knocked Rodgers from the path of other Oklahoma tacklers. Rodgers simply completed a 360-degree circle and then weaved his way through a wall of Sooner Red. Then in a full sprint, he made his way to the sideline with only punter Wylie to beat. Wylie had the angle but Rodgers had an escort, speedster Joe Blahak. Blahak bashed Wylie out of bounds and from there Rodgers could have crawled in for the touchdown.

The touchdown run was the difference in the game, but it also was just the start to a flurry of scoring. Twice, Nebraska pushed the lead to 11 points, at 14-3 in the second quarter and 28-17 in the third quarter. But twice Oklahoma battled back to take the lead, not by the run but by the pass. Oklahoma led 17-14 at the half, in which, a record number of flushes put the Lincoln water supply at a critical low. Then with 7:10 left in the game, Oklahoma forged to a 31-28 lead.

There was plenty of time for Nebraska to come back but

there could be no mistakes. There couldn't even be a quick score. The lightning Oklahoma wishbone had shown what would happen if the Husker offense couldn't control the football. Devaney decided there would be no fancy stuff. He ordered Tagge to run right at the Oklahoma defense. The Boomer Sooner crowd chanted, "defense," but for five minutes Nebraska met in solemn huddles and slowly advanced the football downfield.

"Nobody said a word in the huddle but me," Tagge later reported. "We all just knew what had to be done."

Kinney, who scored four touchdowns in the game, had jersey-after-jersey torn to confetti by the intense Sooner defense. But on play-after-play, he banged his way forward on his way to a 174-yard day rushing. The ball moved steadily enough until Nebraska crossed midfield. In the middle of the field, the Oklahoma defense stiffened and trailing by three, Nebraska faced a third down and eight at the Oklahoma 46. Tagge called for his first passing play of the drive only to find himself trapped near the line of scrimmage with OU's best defensive end, Ray Hamilton, closing in. In less than a second, in the corner of his eye, Tagge picked up Rodgers squirting between two Oklahoma linebackers. He drilled the ball low, but Rodgers made the catch at the 35, sinking to his knees. It was enough for a first down.

Four plays later, Nebraska ruthlessly advanced to the Oklahoma six. The clock was down to two minutes and on second down, Devaney called time out. Jenkins, of *Sports Illustrated*, reported the conversation between Tagge and Devaney this way:

Tagge: "I know we can score, Coach, but I've been worried about eating up the time."

Devaney: "We're going for the touchdown. There won't be any ties."

Tagge: "We'll get it."

Devaney: "What's your best play?"

Tagge: "I think it's off-tackle with Jeff."

Devaney: "Okay, let's run it without any mistakes."

Tagge went back to the huddle and called Kinney's number. The stocky I-Back followed the blocking of tackle Daryl White to the Oklahoma two. Tagge called the same play again and Kinney rammed in for the score. Oklahoma snapped the ball on four plays after the kickoff, but Outland Trophy

winner Larry Jacobson and middle guard Rich Glover, who finished with 22 tackles, led the defense. When the game ended, players and fans were exhausted but Nebraska had won 35-31.



Jeff Kinney — "Running with a vengeance."

Bill Brennan, former sports editor of the Grand Island Independent, was with the Lincoln Journal when the Huskers returned home from the game in 1971 to the Lincoln airport. He covered Nebraska's arrival at the airport when the Husker plane was mobbed by some 30,000 delirious fans. "The buildup for the Nebraska-Oklahoma game was so intense that loyal Cornhusker fans could feel the adrenalin through their television sets and something had to give," Brennan reported. "It did as a crowd estimated as high as 30,000 poured out their emotions at Lincoln Memorial Airport, breaking into a mad rush toward the jetliner returning the Big Eight Champions and No. 1-rated Cornhuskers."

The rush of the fans caused the plane to stop short of its destination and buses had to drive 500 yards to meet it. The excited fans simply rushed the parked plane along side of the buses. Coaches and players were at first dazed when they looked at the mobbing throng of worshippers but quickly held one finger in the air which had the crowd cheering even louder. There were no official dignitaries to meet the plane. The rush at the airport had been spontaneous, completely catching the Lincoln Police Department by surprise. There were traffic jams on all roads to the airport. But once the greeting was over, players and coaches just melted into the crowd to meet relatives or sign autographs. And the fans went home in bumper-to-bumper traffic, honking horns, secure in the knowledge that Nebraska was still No. 1.



Larry Jacobson — Outland Trophy Winner

Hawaii 45-3

All the Oklahoma win did was set up another showdown for Nebraska. Once Nebraska disposed of Oklahoma and No. 3 Alabama dropped Auburn, both teams were quickly issued invitations to the Orange Bowl. Another Game of the Century had been scheduled for Nebraska that year. The only remaining unbeaten teams in the country were rated No. 1 and No. 2. Nebraskans were learning just how difficult an unbeaten season is in modern times.

But before the trip to Miami, Nebraska kept a scheduled journey to Honolulu. It was strictly a vacation. The game with Hawaii was never taken seriously and was easily won 45-3. Devaney told his players to have fun in Hawaii because they would have to win the national championship all over again in Miami.

The Second Game of the Century

Like many Nebraskans, I never take a summer vacation but save my free time for a trip that I work in with Nebraska's bowl game. The trips are a regular habit since the Big Red can always be counted on to make it somewhere. This year I took my family early to Florida to spend Christmas with Chuck Seckman and family in Vero Beach.

But even in Paradise, not all is perfect. Many of the Floridians we encountered turned out to be Johnny Musso fans and therefore backed Alabama. Everywhere we went, we were told what "The Italian Stallion" would do to our Black Shirts. But matters were worse because we were staying near a Chicagoan, who was a diehard Alabama fan and rather beligerent. We were never sure the chap had both oars in the water. He first complained Nebraska hadn't played anybody on its schedule. (We kept bringing up Oklahoma.) He also told us he didn't like the Chicago Bears because they didn't have any players. (We kept bringing up Dick Butkus and Gale Sayers.) In each of our encounters he wanted to place a wager, but I'm not a betting man. It is the only bet collection I think I would have enjoyed making, however.

"Don't rib the poor guy — pray for him," my wife continually admonished me.

But the gentleman surely illustrated the climate before the game. As Nebraska fans, we were happy to be in Florida and excited about the prospect of a re-match with Alabama. We had

been rudely treated during and after the two bowl losses to the Tide, and the aftertaste of our Orange and Sugar Bowl games against them was a bitter one. Yet, here they were again, unabashed as ever, yelling "Roll Tide" and convinced the outcome of the game was a foregone conclusion.

Bear Bryant was the only individual who built up Nebraska from the Alabama side, but Devaney was just as graceful, telling the press what a powerful team Alabama had. While Alabama kept its practices out of everyone's sight, Devaney astonished some writers by keeping his open. One southern writer asked Devaney why he didn't prefer closed gates, and Devaney replied, "Why close the gates? Hell, we don't know what we're doing; I don't know how the opposing scouts would know." But Nebraska had laid out an elaborate plan for Alabama, much of it by future coach Tom Osborne, one of the brains behind the Oklahoma win.

While clouds built into a storm over Miami on New Year's Day, the tension formed in the back of my mind and in those of fellow Nebraska rooters. Rain threatened to take away all of those lightning moves that Johnny Rodgers had used against Oklahoma. And while the clouds moved closer and closer, time seemed to crawl to a standstill. I drank coffee, walked around the pool and was barely conscious of the exciting bowl games being played on television all day while overconfident Alabama fans screamed "Roll Tide."

My only pleasure that afternoon was that I was strutting around in a new red undershirt which I had purchased at a Miami shopping center. It was not a tee-shirt, but a bright red, tank-cut undershirt the likes of which I had never seen before. I knew my good friend Wayne Hogg, the flashiest dresser in



Myself, Vince Ferragamo, Sr. and Wayne Hogg

Omaha, would eat his heart out when he found me with this novel piece of men's wear. We had planned to go out to a restaurant, pick up a few hamburgers and head straight for the game and I remember heading straight for the car, wearing my undershirt. As I popped in behind the steering wheel, I glanced up at dark thunderheads rolling in from the Everglades. Rain was inevitable. I took it as a sign of bad luck and remembered that I had never worn my red undershirt to a Nebraska football game. To my wife's dismay, I am superstitious about every article of clothing I wear. "A national championship game is no place to experiment with a new undershirt," I thought to myself. I shut off the engine, jumped out of the car and hurried to my motel room. Behind me, an impatient carload of companions booed and jeered while they continually repeated "I knew it — I knew it." But I did get my shirt changed. That night I was willing to give my life to watch Nebraska beat Alabama, let alone the shirt off my back.

Whether the shirt made a difference in Nebraska's play in the Orange Bowl is not recorded by history. But the shirt certainly didn't do anything to change the weather. By the time we had picked up the burgers, the roar of thunder and bursts of lightning had given way to a torrential downpour. As we huddled around the car listening to the end of the Rose Bowl and unable to see out the water-spattered windows, I could only think of Johnny Rodgers trying to plant his feet on the soaked and worn-out astroturf in the Orange Bowl.

But by the time we reached the stadium, the rain had ended and my spirits soared. We headed to our seats where I found out how the phrase, "No comments from the peanut gallery" was coined. As we stood on a ramp near our seats, the Huskers took to the field for their pre-game warmups and test of the slippery field. As usual, the southern fans, including the stadium personnel, seemed to be against us northerners. One peanut vendor, unhappy that his journey up the ramp had been halted by Big Red fans, turned to nobody in particular and sneered, "Why don't you poor, sick fans get out there with your poor, sick team?" The minute he spoke, an irate female slapped him across the face and the sound exploded under the ramp. Nebraska fans roared while the peanut vendor fled to more friendly grounds. The incident temporarily brought me out of my somber state, but I remember a picture friends Charlotte and Al Eaton took of our group just before the game started.

Captured by the camera were almost a dozen Nebraskans sporting off their new tans and one pale-faced Charlie Winkler.

Fans for both sides broke into a loud roar at kickoff time, but all I could hear was the pounding of my own heart. When Nebraska failed to score on its first possession, I was afraid they would have to carry me out on a stretcher and if the Huskers lost, it probably would be a slab.



Chuck Seckman and me — “Tense moments before the N.U. defense made a Shetland Pony out of the “Italian Stallion.”

But the night turned out to be the most golden moment in Nebraska football history. Nebraska’s defense stopped Alabama cold on its first possession and a punt away from the dangerous Rodgers provided the Huskers with the football on the Alabama 47. From there, Nebraska scored in five plays with I-Back Jeff Kinney plunging over for the score from the two. Once again, Nebraska stopped Alabama deep in its own territory. This time the Tide made the mistake of punting the football to Rodgers. The punt coverage was excellent, but Rodgers disappeared through a sea of red defenders and returned the kick 77 yards to break the game wide open.

As scribe Dan Jenkins wrote for *Sports Illustrated*: “Rodgers took this punt on a sudden bounce 77 yards from the Alabama goal, with red jerseys engulfing him. A swerve to the right, quickly, a turn upfield, a couple of blocks, an alley, and it

was burn, baby burn, right past the Alabama bench. Following the two-point conversion it was 14-0 and get the champagne ready.”

“The thing was, we really never got to see what we could do against them but everything was working,” quarterback Jerry Tagge told *Sports Illustrated* after the game.

By the half, the score was 28-0 as Tagge scored from the one and running back Gary Dixon carried from the two to put the icing on a couple of more Husker drives. In the third quarter, Rich Sanger booted a 21-yard field goal and alternate quarterback Van Brownson scored on a one-yard plunge to cap a final scoring march in the final quarter. In a bittersweet moment, highly-respected safety Jim Anderson picked off an interception but after starting 36 games as a Husker he was denied running it back for the touchdown by being knocked out of bounds at the one. The Green Bay star had always been regarded as a coach on the field.

Meanwhile, the Husker defense reduced Johnny Musso, “The Italian Stallion,” to a Shetland pony.

Much of the drama of the day came in the locker room after the game had ended. On national television, Devaney chided the officials, who awarded him the McArthur Bowl Trophy, symbolic of supremacy in college football. The award had always been made at the end of the regular season but in 1971, officials had decided to wait until the end of the bowl games to make the award. “Who else do we have to play to win this?” asked the exasperated Devaney.

Out of view of the national cameras, Johnny Rodgers awarded the game ball to Rex Lowe, a Husker recruit who saw very little action on the playing field. While his teammates were battling to retain a national title, Rex was battling a terminal illness. Rex, who knew the deepest meaning of valor and courage, died just a few months later. His spirit had been an inspiration to us all, on and off the field.

The raves about the greatness of the Nebraska team were piled like an avalanche in the Swiss Alps. One national writer suggested Nebraska play the Dallas Cowboys for a world championship. In the final media polls, the Big Eight teams — Nebraska, Oklahoma and Colorado — finished 1-2-3. The Big Eight was declared the toughest football conference in the country. Nebraska in 1971 is still considered one of the greatest college football teams of all-time. To me it was the greatest

ever. Norris Anderson of the Football News agrees to this 100%.

A subdued Bear Bryant, temporarily knocked off his legendary perch, was gracious in defeat. In a silent locker room, he told reporters his team had been crushed. "This is one of the greatest, if not the greatest team, I've ever seen," he said. It was his worst defeat ever at Alabama. "We were beaten soundly by a far superior team," Bryant said, "I felt I had a poor game plan. We made a lot of mistakes, but you have to say Nebraska forced us into most of them. I wouldn't have minded playing lousy if we could have lucked out and won. But they just toyed with us, and our kids didn't come down here to be humiliated. They gave it the best shot they had."



Johnny Rodgers presenting the game ball to Rex Lowe, who was to lose his greatest battle a few months later.

The only blot on this shining season was that Devaney was not named Coach of the Year by the American Football Coaches Association. The honor went to Bear Bryant. It has to be one of Devaney's greatest disappointments, that he never was able to win the award given by his own colleagues. But the failure was theirs, not his.

1971 HONORS

The season's honors:

All American — Larry Jacobson, defensive tackle; Rich Glover, middle guard; Willie Harper, defensive end; Johnny Rodgers, running back; Jerry Tagge, quarterback; Jeff Kinney, running back.

Special honors:

Larry Jacobson — Outland Trophy; finalist in Vince Lombardi voting.

Rich Glover — John L. Young Trophy to outstanding lineman, presented by the Gridiron Club of Washington, D.C.; Vince Lombardi trophy finalist.



Rich Glover — A class guy who gave 100 percent.

Chapter 18

Try for a Triple Crown—1972

It was a sultry, almost-humid night in Los Angeles when the Huskers took the field for their opening game in 1972. Coach Bob Devaney had announced it would be his last season and he was going to end it by trying to do what no college football team had ever managed, three football championships in a row. The material was there for the most part. Dave "The Dealer" Humm had been carefully groomed for the quarterback slot and was considered to be a better passer than Jerry Tagge or Van Brownson. All-Americans Johnny Rodgers, Rich Glover and Willie Harper were in their senior years. But many things have to go right for even a great football team to win a national title, and Coach Devaney knew his team had the toughest opener possible against UCLA.

I didn't make that trip west but chose to fret and stew about the squad back in Grand Island. It's hard for a perfect team to improve and there's nowhere for the No. 1 team in the nation to go but back down. Those were the thoughts in my mind when two young Grand Island attorneys, John Wolf and Bill VonSeggern, stopped by "to feel my pulse" about the game on Saturday morning. I said I had an eerie feeling about the Huskers, but they assured me that I was just a worrier. I admitted I was a fretter and that my own football radar was not always accurate in detecting the outcome of games involving the Huskers. I jokingly said I was also the guy who predicted Liz Taylor would become a nun.

The conversation eased my nerves somewhat and I enthusiastically pulled out my recorder to tape the game, something I had been doing faithfully since the 1969 season. Following my away game ritual, I put on my backup recording system and armed myself with an ample supply of hot chocolate and a large bowl of popcorn.

But from the start, things went wrong for Nebraska and I began to wish I wasn't a tee-totaler. The Bruin offense was led by Mark Harmon, now a handsome and well-known television actor. Everytime I see him act on "Loveboat", I root for him not to get the girl because of what he did to our Husker defense

that night. Also, everytime he does that candy commercial, the M & M's melt in my wife's sweaty hands.

Handsome Harmon led UCLA to an early 10-0 lead and by the end of the third quarter, I knew I wasn't going to enjoy this game as much as the California fans. Trans-planted Californian Ron Depue, now a prominent Grand Island attorney, had gone home for the game, a converted Big Red fan. But he later told me he spent most of the night looking around the huge Coliseum for a place to jump.

Just before the half, dependable Rich Sanger booted a field goal and Johnny Rodgers added an 11-yard touchdown run to tie the game and Big Red fans breathed easier. But Nebraska's troubles continued after the intermission. There were a total of four fumbles and two pass interceptions in the game and even then Humm was able to fire a 44-yard pass to tight end Jerry List to keep the game tied at 17-17. But then on two key possessions, Nebraska failed to move the football and UCLA mounted one last drive to the Husker 12. From there, Efren Herrera kicked a game-winning field goal to end a 23-game Nebraska winning streak. It also was the first loss in 33 games for Devaney's Huskers.

At Big Boo's cafe the next week, we all felt as perky as a hernia at a weightlifter's convention. But back in Lincoln, Devaney carefully told his squad it still could win a national title.

Texas A & M had to pay for the Nebraska upset one week later as the Huskers took a 37-7 win on a pair of Dave Humm touchdown passes. Then against Army and a national television audience, Devaney proved two points — that his Huskers were still awesome and that he was right in his crusade to try to lift NCAA limits on traveling squads. In earshot of a live microphone, Devaney actually yelled at a back-up quarterback to keep the ball on the ground and run out the clock. In the most lopsided game ever televised, Nebraska punished Army 77-7. Army was held to a minus 12 yards rushing and reserve fullback Ralph Powell was the game's leading rusher with 86 yards.

Many bookies wouldn't even take bets on the game, but crafty Stan Kully, a Grand Island businessman, thought he'd worked himself into the wager of the year before the game started. The morning of the game, we all had breakfast at Big Boo's and its proprietor George Boosalis needled Stan for a friendly wager and even offered to give him 50 points. But wily

Stan held out until Big Boo finally pushed the wager to 70 points, the most I've ever known to be offered on a football game. When the game turned into a standoff, Stan sadly remarked, "It sure beats heck, when a guy can't even win on a 70-point spread."

Minnesota was the third straight Nebraska victim as Humm hit 11 passes for 192 yards in a 49-0 rout. Gary Dixon scored three touchdowns while Johnny the Jet caught seven passes for 127 yards and returned five punts for 104 yards, including a 64-yard touchdown run. Despite an open date the following week, Nebraska stayed on stride and pounded Missouri 62-0. Eight different Huskers scored against a Missouri team that rebounded the next weekend to upset Notre Dame. Life wasn't much better for Kansas, a 56-0 victim the next week. Rolling through the season like a runaway freight train, Nebraska beat Oklahoma State 34-0, making it a 191-0 margin against the opposition in four games. The last team to score against Nebraska had been Army, a 70-point loser, and that was against our reserves.

National television nervously joined Nebraska for its visit to Colorado. The Buffs were thought to be a national contender but had been upset by Oklahoma State two weeks earlier. The Buffs wanted to soften that anguish with a Nebraska upset. But Nebraska jumped to a 19-0 lead and went on to win 33-10 after the Buffs cut the score to a nine-point deficit at the half. Brave I-Back Gary Dixon gained 94 yards in the game with his broken jaw wired shut. He was the target of criticism by less loyal Nebraskans in the UCLA game, but he never lacked for courage, as play in Folsom Field showed.

Heisman Trophy candidate Johnny Rodgers was at his best in the win and did everything but play sax for the NU pep band at the half. Rodgers had the entire Colorado defense jittery the entire contest and pulled off one of those plays you have to witness to believe. Johnny danced and jukeed from one sideline to the other with frantic Buff defenders in desperate pursuit but slipped into the clear along the sidelines, only an arm's length away from Colorado coach, Eddie Crowder. A photographer caught a frame of Crowder on his tip toes with both arms outstretched within a foot of the streaking Rodgers. Later, he was asked why he just didn't go ahead and tackle Johnny the Jet. In a classic remark, Crowder replied, "I guess I should have; I was the only one in position to do so."

After watching Nebraska whip Colorado in Boulder, I traveled with the Big Red to Ames where I watched our fine freshmen team beat the Iowa yearlings on Friday with good friends Wayne Hogg and Chuck Seckman. As such players as Dave Shamblin and John O'Leary led a 40-13 rout, I remarked, "I hope we don't need one of these extra points tomorrow." It was an innocent remark but my conversation with the George Amundson family over coffee just before the game Saturday wasn't. The parents of the Iowa State starting quarterback had traveled to Ames from Aberdeen, S.D., and they told me they had wished their son had been given a chance to go to Nebraska. Reading between the lines, I knew George was out to show the Husker coaches they had made a mistake.

Playing on a sloppy field, Nebraska gave up six fumbles and each one fired up the upset-minded Cyclones. The Huskers fought to a 23-17 lead over Iowa State with just 1:03 remaining, but George Amundson never played a better minute in his life. He directed the Cyclones downfield and with 23 seconds left fired a game-tying touchdown to tight end Keith Krepfle. Cyclone students flooded into the end zone after the score and probably cost their team the chance to win. It took several minutes to clear the field and that was too much time to think for their placekicker, who booted the extra point try wide of its mark. The game ended in a 23-23 tie, which cost Nebraska a third national title.

Wayne, Chuck and I stopped at our favorite restaurant in Omaha after a silent drive home from the game, but the prime-rib was tasteless. As I drove alone to Grand Island, I replayed the tape of the game scared the "defeat" actually had been true. I pulled onto my driveway as the final moments of the game were replayed on the cassette and I somehow hoped it would end differently than what I had seen. But it didn't. I felt like the guy who believes in reincarnation but has a continuous nightmare that he came back as a fire hydrant and all his enemies came back as dogs.

The next week Coach Devaney won his 100th game as Nebraska beat Kansas State 59-7 on a snow-covered field. Jeff Moran, a hard-working Husker back, had his day in the sun, or in this case, the snow, as he rushed for 129 yards, just 21 less than the Wildcats' production. It had to be a bittersweet moment for Devaney, who had watched all flickering No. 1 hopes go out the week before. But he was gracious in receiving

his well-earned congratulations.

On Thanksgiving Day, national television was back to record the annual shoot-out with Oklahoma. The Sooners entered Memorial Stadium bent on revenge from the Game of the Century loss from the 1971 season. Nevertheless, Nebraska, declared Big Eight champions and awarded a third straight Orange Bowl bid, grabbed the momentum early and jumped to a 14-0 lead in the first half. In fact, the Huskers missed going ahead by three touchdowns when Johnny Rodgers was shoved out of bounds only to come back on the field of play for a long scoring catch. But the play was ruled illegal and the momentum changed. By today's rules, the catch would have been a score.

Oklahoma tied the game on touchdown runs by Joe Washington and Grant Burget. Nebraska's defense recovered to make several strong stands in the final quarter, but Rick Fulcher booted a wind-aided 41-yard field goal to give Oklahoma a 17-14 win. It was the first Nebraska loss at home since 1969, and the second loss anywhere in three years, so things weren't really as bad as they seemed. But after the loss, I felt like the guy who spent his life paying for a cemetery plot only to be lost at sea.

The game had been billed as a Heisman Trophy test for Johnny Rodgers and Oklahoma gridders were out to hit No. 20 that day because they felt the national honor belonged to teammate Greg Pruitt. The Sooners punished Rodgers hard and were successful to an extent, in holding him back. But the untold story that day is of Rodgers' courage. He had to leave the game with painfully bruised ribs. The courageous athlete asked therapist George Sullivan and trainer Paul Schneider to wrap his ribs so he could return to play. Many things have been written of Johnny Rodgers, some not flattering. But even stories about Johnny's gifted abilities don't do him justice as a man. Those who think of Rodgers rarely draw the picture of an injured athlete trying to put himself back in the big game. Nor do they picture millionaire Johnny Rodgers returning to Omaha for a roast to raise money for underprivileged boys. I have been on many speaking engagements across the nation, in the past four years, but being invited to appear on the Johnny Rodgers roast in Omaha was one of the most rewarding. This event was spearheaded by Charlie Washington, a great human being and a great Nebraska U. booster. To see the former Omaha Tech superstar show that he was just another humble individual who



George Sullivan — "A credit to any organization."

cared about the young boys coming up in his former neighborhood by raising money for a boys club was rewarding. "Big John" is more than a former Husker star. In my book he stands pretty tall by many dimensions.

Orange Bowl III

Any thoughts that Nebraska's third straight trip to the Orange Bowl would be a game without intrigue quickly disappeared when their opponent became Notre Dame. Devaney and Notre Dame coach Ara Parseghian had exchanged several barbs just two years earlier over who was the nation's No. 1 team. And the plot quickly thickened when Notre Dame's athletic director, Edward "Moose" Krause, suddenly became critical of the procedure of red-shirting college athletes so they could be at a school five years, instead of four. Most schools in the country red-shirt players, often to their benefit and usually for the team's good, but it suddenly bothered Krause just before the 1973 Orange Bowl. He accused Nebraska of having 20 or 30 red-shirts and claimed athletes went to school there primarily to play football and not attend classes.

Such an accusation overlooked all of Nebraska's Academic All-Americans and the school's unique tutoring program as well as one of the best athlete graduation records in the country. But Devaney graciously replied that he saw nothing wrong with giving boys from eight-man football programs extra time to adapt to the increasingly sophisticated game of college football. Devaney also said he saw nothing wrong with allowing young men an extra year to handle the combined pressures of football and education. It occurred to Devaney that an athlete off the field could turn more attention to his studies. At Nebraska, Devaney said players are in a low-key athletic program as freshmen and most often red-shirted as sophomores. Those happen to be the most critical years to a student's academic life, Devaney noted. Most students have trouble in their earlier years at college, not their late ones.

Then Nebraska did its talking on the field. Johnny Rodgers showed the world he truly was deserving of the Heisman Trophy by scoring four touchdowns and passing for another in a 40-6 rout of the Irish, one of the worst Notre Dame losses on record. In a surprise move, Devaney shifted Johnny from his usual wingback slot to I-Back. On 15 carries, Johnny gained 81 yards and capped his record career 50 touchdowns by receiving a 50-yard pass from Dave Humm. Rodgers' touchdown pass was a 52-yarder to wide receiver Frosty Anderson. Humm, meanwhile, hit 13 of 19 passes for 185 yards as Nebraska racked up 30 first downs while such defenders as Glover, Harper, John Dutton, Monte Johnson, Bill Janssen, Steve Manstedt, Johnny Pitts, Jim Branch, Bob Thornton (now secondary coach), Randy Borg, Joe Blahak and Dave Mason held Notre Dame to 13.

But the game was mainly the "Johnny Rodgers' Show" and after the game I jokingly asked why he also didn't go out before the game and sing the national anthem. "I would have but I wasn't asked," Johnny replied.

For Coach Devaney, it was his last game, and he admitted it was sad to approach the end of his fabulous career. He had taken a sagging football program that had produced just two bowl teams in two decades and provided football teams that went to bowl games with yearly regularity. He left the game as its winningest active coach with a lifetime percentage of .806. During his golden years at Nebraska 1962-1972, his teams won 101 games, lost 20 and tied 2 for a winning percentage of .829.

At the time of his departure, there was talk Devaney might be a pro football coach but Bob said coaching is a young man's game. Today he remains as athletic director at Nebraska, the overseer of a football program as great as the one he built. He is one of the game's greatest organizers and innovators. Win or lose, Devaney never looked back. He was always looking far ahead. He always had the edge. He was a winner's winner.

HUSKER HONORS

The 1972 Huskers were ranked No. 4 by Associated Press and gained their own share of honors and they were as follows:

SPECIAL NATIONAL HONORS

Johnny Rodgers won the coveted Heisman Trophy Award; The Walter Camp Award; ABC-Chevrolet Offensive Player of the Year Scholarship.

Rich Glover won the Outland Trophy and the Lombardi Award; American Football Coaches Association-Kodak Player of the Year; Third Place in Heisman Trophy voting.

Willie Harper was voted the Washington, D.C., Pigskin Club Defensive Player of the Year.

ALL-AMERICAN

Johnny Rodgers made about every All-American team picked.

Rich Glover made eight of them.

Willie Harper made seven of them.

Daryl White made one.

Chapter 19

The Osborne Era

When Coach Bob Devaney handpicked his successor as Nebraska football coach, he picked the man he would have wanted for a son. There were many capable replacements from the best coaching staff in the nation. Many went on to coach elsewhere — Warren Powers at Missouri, Monte Kiffin at North Carolina State, Carl Selmer at Miami University and Jim Walden at Washington State. But ahead of them all, Devaney chose 34-year-old Tom Osborne, one of the brightest of all the brilliant minds in the Devaney brain trust.

It was no easy task for a coach to follow the man who had just led Nebraska to its first two national championships in the school's football history. Realizing how difficult the job would be, Devaney chose his replacement very carefully. He chose a man who had been a great athlete in his playing days, a man who had earned his doctorate and taught psychology at the University and a man who had helped design the most versatile offense in the country. Furthermore, he picked a man so perfect in his moral character, he has been ridiculed as being an adult Boy Scout.

Osborne, the Omaha World-Herald athlete of the year in 1959, played both football and basketball at Hastings College. I had the rare privilege of watching Osborne play both sports and he has few rivals among the greatest athletes from the state's colleges. Only Cliff Squires of Nebraska Wesleyan and Tom Kropp of Kearney State College caused such a statewide stir during their athletic careers. Osborne was drafted into pro football where he played for the Washington Redskins and the San Francisco 49'ers. But in 1962, after just three years in pro football, Osborne opted to return to the campus life. He applied for and received a position with Devaney as a graduate assistant while he earned his doctorate.

In 1965, Osborne held onto a dual position, an instructor in educational psychology and assistant football coach. But as Osborne became more of an important cog in Devaney's coaching gears, it became increasingly difficult to continue both professions. So in 1967, Osborne gave up teaching for his first

love, football. He became the offensive co-ordinator with special charge of the receivers.

Osborne took to coaching football in the Devaney system like a duck to water. He was the type of coach athletes at the school could relate to and respect. As offensive co-ordinator, Osborne was a brilliant general. From high in the press box, he called the plays that would be relayed into the Nebraska huddle and then executed with success at the line of scrimmage. While Devaney was on the sidelines, motivating his players and charming the press, Osborne was above the stadium developing the plays from his natural genius for football strategy.

Not everyone was happy with the much deliberated selection of Osborne and his comparisons with Devaney were inevitable. Osborne faced the prospect of not only being compared to Devaney as a coaching legend, but to a man who had left the game when he had been at his very best. When Osborne took the coaching job, Nebraska had won three straight Orange Bowls, two national titles in its last three years and 33 of its last 37 games while only losing two and tying two.



Coach Tom Osborne and All-American center Rick Bonness.

In short, unless Osborne opened his first season with a national title, he would not be able to exceed the performance of Devaney in recent years. If he didn't take Nebraska to a major bowl game and win it, he wouldn't even be able to match the performance of the man who had named him coach. And no matter what Tom Osborne attempted, he would be second-guessed like no other Nebraska coach had been second-guessed before.

The criticism of Osborne began even before he ever took the field. Some, failing to remember all the great coaches from Miami of Ohio, didn't like the fact that Osborne was associated with a small college. Others said he was too serious and not as outgoing as Devaney. Some worried about his ability as a recruiter, and Osborne himself said he looked at recruiting as a "necessary evil." The young Nebraska mentor admitted he didn't look forward to being in the public eye, calling it the price he had to pay to work with young men and coach football. But nobody works at recruiting or accommodating the sports media any harder than Tom Osborne.

The most interesting criticism ever leveled at the highly successful red head is that the one coach he has never been able to replace is himself. When Devaney was on the field, Osborne would sit in the press box and find flaws in the offense and defense in enemy teams. The question most often asked of me as I travel around the state speaking about the Big Red Football team is, "Why can't Osborne still be in the press box?" I simply answer that there's no reason he can't. But he wouldn't be able to make instant decisions from the press box. The press box is the place to plan and give advice. The sideline is the place to run the show. It is amazing how many people fail to understand why a person can't coach without being physically present in front of his players and assistant coaches.

To those who question Osborne's recruiting ability, it is sufficient to remind them that Tom was the recruiting co-ordinator during Devaney's championship years and he was among the very best. I personally rate him as the best in the business.

1973 — The Debut

National television broadcast Nebraska's 1973 opener with UCLA when Osborne made his coaching debut. There were 74,966 fans jammed into the stadium as the Huskers tried to

gain revenge with the team that had stopped the Big Red so effectively one year earlier. Osborne unleashed many of his great offensive coaching plays and the expected showdown turned into a Husker rout. The win was so decisive that the Huskers were vaulted to a No. 2 rating in the nation.

Reserve quarterback Steve Runty stepped in for an injured Dave Humm while fire-eater Tony Davis made his debut at I-Back and gained 147 yards. "Tough Tony", scoring on one touchdown from the one, made one of the loudest pops ever heard in the stadium, slamming into a Bruin defender. After scoring on a 43-yard run, he slammed his fist into a chain link fence, demonstrating the fierce, competitive spirit that made the "Tecumseh Tornado" so unique during his three playing years. Meanwhile, Runty hit nine of 11 passes and Nebraska eased to a 40-13 win.

It was a game in which Osborne cleared the bench and even considered sticking in an all-freshmen backfield of quarterback Earl Everett, wingback Bobby Thomas, Dave Gillespie at fullback and Jason Justice at fullback. But such an exhibition might have been considered a cheap shot at UCLA and Osborne didn't want such an incident to taint his debut. Also, Nebraska's defense as the Huskers swept the bench had let up against UCLA late in the game and the opportunity to make such a move never presented itself as the Bruins maintained ball control. But the idea raised a point. Nebraska often is criticized for never playing freshmen, another point fired at me during speaking engagements. My reply again is so simple some refuse to accept it. Nebraska coaches are willing to play freshmen, I-Back Monte Anthony and fullback Andra Franklin being prime examples. But people fail to realize that Nebraska is so deep in talent that it is difficult for a freshman to prove he is consistently superior to an upperclassman on the practice field. There is such a mental adjustment for any lad stepping up from the prep ranks to college level football.

The rise to a high place in the ratings backfired for the Huskers. Instead of being accepted as an instant success, Osborne's 1973 team became the target of every opponent it faced. Teams often would be upset or have an off game the week before Nebraska, caught looking ahead. Then they would rebound into an awesome opponent, the result of hours of extra preparation to take on Nebraska. We always seem to be the opponents' bowl game and if they can beat us this makes their

season a success regardless of their overall team record.

North Carolina State first took the challenge under the direction of highly respected coach Lou Hotz. Former Omahan Stan Fritts, who had moved south with his family, kept the Wolfpack ahead in the game with runs of 59 and 16 yards, but Humm came off the bench to throw a 40-yard touchdown pass to end Frosty Anderson to tie the game at 7-7. The game stayed dangerously close until the final quarter when Nebraska scored three touchdowns.

Wisconsin offered even a tougher challenge the next week. Though Humm compiled 305 yards in total offense and hit a school record of 25 of 31 completions, Nebraska had to score twice in the final five minutes of the game for a dramatic win.

In the first Minnesota sellout since 1960, Scottsbluff's Frosty Anderson caught three touchdown passes in a 48-7 rout of the Golden Gophers. When injuries felled so many Husker starters, red-shirted sophomore John O'Leary was pressed into action and scored on a six-yard run and a 66-yard punt return. Bob Martin of David City tackled everybody but the cheerleaders in a tremendous defensive showing.



Frosty Anderson

In game five, Osborne absorbed his first defeat as a head coach. It was a clear example of the only thing Osborne has ever lacked as a Nebraska coach — Irish Luck. Devaney was always known as a man favored by Lady Luck and reputed to be able to make the sun come from out of the clouds whenever he stepped on the field. But Osborne never had found the right rabbit's foot. In this contest, Nebraska built up 292 yards in passing and held Missouri to seven yards. But on a fumbled punt recovery late in the game, Missouri pulled off a 13-12 upset at Faurot Field. The Tigers went ahead 13-6 on the quick score, but Osborne brought Nebraska back down the field and proved he still was a gambler, if not always a fortunate one. He ignored the tie and went for the win and lost the game trying to score on a two-point conversion.

I remember the trip well. The loss was a devastating blow to the fans who made the trip and the departure from the stadium was a miserable one. It is very difficult to get out of the Faurot Field parking lot but the loss exaggerated the frustrating traffic jam. I felt like the chap that won a one-way cruise to the Bermuda Triangle.

Nebraska had to face Kansas in its comeback efforts and the game was billed as a passing showdown between Humm and Jayhawk thrower David Jaynes. Instead, the game turned into a defensive struggle. Future Oakland Raider Super-Bowler Bob Nelson picked off a Jaynes pass at the Kansas 29 and returned it 16 yards to set up the winning field goal by Rich Sanger. Defensive back Ardell Johnson was the game's other hero by blocking an extra point try in the 10-9 win.

But the Huskers ran into more trouble at Stillwater. Oklahoma State, another team pinning its season on a Husker upset, kept in the game and with 6:20 remaining, had the contest tied 17-17. Osborne decided against anything fancy in favor of ball control and turned to reliable Tony Davis for some heavy-duty running. After Nebraska took over the football on the Cowboy 46, Davis carried for three yards, caught a 14-yard pass and then carried nine straight times to the OSU six-inch line. On fourth down, Osborne called for a running play by Davis instead of a field goal attempt. But a Cowboy defender broke through Nebraska's blocking and tackled the weary Davis short of the goal line.

After the disappointing tie, Nebraska scored two quick touchdowns enroute to a 28-16 win over Colorado and repeated

the same type of quick lead during a 31-7 win over Iowa State. Nebraska had to finish the rest of the season on the road. There was no problem in Manhattan where the Huskers racked up 612 yards in a 50-21 win over Kansas State, a game in which Davis and counterpart John O'Leary became the first Huskers to ever rush for more than 100 yards in the same game. But the season ended with a thud in a 27-0 loss at Norman. It was the first time a Nebraska team had failed to score in 58 games. Only once, did Nebraska cross midfield, on a 33-yard pass play from Humm to tight end Larry Mushinski at the Sooner 33. But on the play, he fumbled and Oklahoma recovered to end any Husker threat.

Cotton Bowl

Despite the Oklahoma loss and just a so-so 4-2-1 conference record, Nebraska still was a highly respected football team. The mighty football program and loyal fan following enticed Cotton Bowl officials to extend a New Year's Day Bid to the Huskers. More than 20,000 Nebraskans followed this team to the "Big D" and the Huskers made their trip worthwhile. The Huskers were in a crushing defensive battle against Texas but the Black Shirts held Longhorn star Roosevelt Leaks to only 48 yards in a 19-3 win.

It was a bone-chilling game that was tied 3-3 at the half. Safety Bob Thornton returned a Texas field goal try 41 yards to set up a winning touchdown in the third quarter. Eight plays later, Fremont's Ritch Bahe sprinted 12 yards to give Nebraska a 10-3 lead. Tough Tony Davis, the offensive player of the game, added another touchdown, a three-yard dive, to put the game out of reach. Rich Sanger booted a 43-yard field goal to complete the scoring, his second 3-pointer in the game. The first was set up on a 65-yard pass interception by defensive end Steve Manstedt, who ran the ball to the Texas eight late in the first half.

The Cotton Bowl was very important in restoring confidence in the Nebraska football program. Coach Osborne had been bitten by bad luck against Missouri and in a tie with Oklahoma State, but the 27-0 loss to Oklahoma that year had been a demoralizing blow. The trip to the Cotton Bowl offered the chance for the Huskers to regain their respect and it is to their credit, the 1973 players seized it. It was the fifth straight bowl win by a Nebraska football team, and the burning torch

had successfully passed from one great coach to a worthy successor.

If Nebraska fans could find time to second-guess the losses of Nebraska in Osborne's first year, they also found reassurance that the Huskers were still among the few, elite winning football programs in the country. Devaney hadn't left Nebraska fans with two decades of wondering what a winning season was — an unwanted legacy that followed Biff Jones in 1940. Nebraska, under Osborne, was cast in the same mold as it had been under Devaney. The team remained a perennial visitor to the bowl games. The Huskers still won regularly. The Huskers were still among the teams that could be counted on one hand to battle for the national championship and to prove what I continually tell every group that I speak before, "Our football program is among the top ten in the nation."

1973 HONORS

All-American: John Dutton, defensive tackle; Daryl White, offensive tackle; Steve Manstedt, defensive end.

1974 Season

Osborne's second season started with good news and bad news. Dave Humm was in his senior year and Nebraska quickly caught national attention when the All-American prospect joined with Cheyenne cruiser "Donnie" Westbrook to shell a promising Oregon squad 61-7. But one week later, Humm was knocked out of the game with a hip-pointer and on national television the Huskers were upset by Wisconsin 21-20. I-Back John O'Leary played heroically in the game with a broken jaw but the Badgers won on a 77-yard pass play late in the game and the Nebraska less-than-faithful screamed, "We were out coached."

A healthy Dave Humm was back in the lineup a week later and frosh I-Back Monte Anthony picked up 111 yards as Nebraska rebounded 49-7 against Northwestern. When the Huskers picked up 524 yards in a 54-0 thrashing of Minnesota, the Wisconsin upset looked more like a fluke. The most impressive thing about Minnesota was its band and a pro prospect named Rick Upchurch. But the day belonged to Humm who set a school record of 33 touchdown passes on a

first-quarter toss to Tony Davis. It broke the old school mark of 32 set by Jerry Tagge in 1969-71.

The season seemed to parallel the health of Humm. The southpaw quarterback was knocked unconscious in the Big Eight opener against Missouri and Nebraska, which led 10-0 after three periods, lost 21-10 when Missouri scored three times in the final quarter. The game dropped Nebraska to 3-2 and left a jam-packed Memorial Stadium crowd stunned. It had been more than five years since the Huskers had been knocked out of the national title picture so early in one season.

But while the pigskin pessimists growled, Osborne reunited his forces. Humm bounced back from his injury by completing a national record of 23 of 27 passes in a 56-0 win over Kansas for an .852 completion percentage. By hitting his 36th TD pass in the game, Humm also set another Big Eight record. But his most sensational feat in the game was 15 consecutive completions, also a national and Big Eight mark. I did a slow burn after the game when Kansas announcers belittled the effort, saying Humm's effort was less than remarkable because he often threw short passes in the flat or the high percentage type. Such talk, though, is for losers.

After the Kansas game, Nebraska barely escaped in a 7-3 win over Oklahoma State when the Cowboys fumbled just outside the Nebraska end zone. Senior Ardell Johnson was the defensive hero in the game when he pounced on the fumble and intercepted a pass to stop two OSU drives and then blocked a field goal attempt to preserve the win.

Once more on network television, Nebraska was back to awesome in a 31-15 win at Colorado. Monte Anthony rushed for 157 yards as Nebraska built a 31-0 lead before Osborne cleared his bench. I journeyed to Ames the next week to watch Nebraska beat Iowa State 23-13. Husker coaches and players cast a wary eye before the game, remembering the Cyclones had tied a No. 2-rated Nebraska team just two years earlier. Also, the games in Ames were continually becoming more rowdy. This contest was the last one ever played in the ancient Clyde Williams Field, the worst playing surface in the conference. Traveling with son Chuck and friend Jimmy Jones, I knew we were in for a wild welcome when we crossed the Missouri River. The Cyclone followers didn't disappoint us. The game itself was nearly delayed as students hurled smoke bombs onto the field. The area looked more like a South American Revolution than

the site of a football game. But once the game started, the only bombs unloaded were from Humm, who helped the Huskers to a 23-0 lead before the Husker reserves gave up a pair of scores.

Despite two losses, Nebraska fought its way to a No. 6 rating and when the Huskers disposed of Kansas State, 35-7, it set up another shootout with No. 1-rated Oklahoma. At the time it was played before the largest Memorial Stadium crowd ever, 76,636 fans. It was one of the best-designed game plans yet by the youthful Osborne. Earlier that week, he put in several new plays for the game, and I remember carrying the dark secret all week. Only when we were seated for the kickoff did I whisper one of the plays in the ear of my son, Chuck, and we waited for it to unfold. Using several new blocking wrinkles and some other daring calls, Nebraska kept the football away from the explosive Sooner wishbone offense and forced a 7-7 tie at the half.

The score was still knotted at a touchdown apiece when Osborne decided to call the play my son and I were looking for. Nebraska had moved the ball to the Sooner 11 but the drive had bogged down. Quarterback David Humm took the snap and pitched out to I-Back John O'Leary for what looked like an end sweep. The quick reacting Sooners built a wall between O'Leary and the sidelines. But O'Leary took just a couple of short steps forward and dropped back to pass. The well-disciplined Sooners hung back on every eligible Nebraska receiver except for one. Nobody thought O'Leary would throw the ball back to Humm. But instead of looking downfield, the native New Yorker tossed to his quarterback back across the field in the flat and Humm thundered into the end zone untouched. The play sent Big Red fans to their feet and good old Memorial Stadium nearly rocked itself into a shambles.

When Oklahoma fumbled the ensuing kickoff, the packed house went into a frenzy. But the delirious roars of the well-meaning fans helped turn the tide of the game. Because of the noise, Husker receivers failed to pick up an audible call by Humm on a crucial third down and the play failed. Mike Coyle, usually dependable, missed a 21-yard field goal attempt and the Sooner offense found the break it needed. The final 28-14 score was not indicative of the close contest. Instead of a win over Oklahoma, Nebraska found itself ending the season with an 8-3 mark and a second place Big Eight tie with Missouri.

Sugar Bowl

Nebraska was still an attractive package for the major bowl scouts. Osborne, the Nebraska football team and 10,000 fans journeyed south for the fifth straight New Year's bowl game. This time the visit was to the Sugar Bowl, played on New Year's Eve. The game was as exciting as many of the greater matchups of Nebraska against Oklahoma. The opponent, led by a speedy fleet of receivers and defensive players, was Florida.

The Gators took a 10-0 lead at the half when a Florida defensive back picked off an early Dave Humm pass to set up a 21-yard touchdown run by ace back Tony Green. Dave Posey booted a 40-yard field goal with just two seconds left before the half to put Nebraska on the ropes.

Osborne, unfairly accused of being conservative, made a courageous decision at the half. Humm was having a sub-par performance and the Nebraska offense was sputtering. In two of Nebraska's losses during the season, the departure of an injured Humm had been part of the turning point in the games. But Osborne pulled his star quarterback just to change the rhythm of the game. Junior Terry Luck, a fine leader but never blessed with fortune from his last name, took over his helm. Luck had been seriously injured early in his Nebraska career and had chosen to stay an extra year as a red-shirt. The knee injury had claimed his natural speed but there never was a more willing player than the North Carolina sophomore.

The weapons he brought to the field were his inspiration and leadership. And when Nebraska's defense made a gallant goal-line stand late in the third quarter — a touchdown that would have put the game nearly out of reach — Terry took over. The ball was at the Nebraska one but the veteran sub-engineered a 99-yard touchdown drive without ever throwing a pass. Freshman Monte Anthony skipped over a tackler to score with 13:24 left in the game to cut the Florida lead to 10-7. Then Luck directed another Nebraska drive to set up a 37-yard field goal kick with 7:13 remaining. One more time, Luck barked the signals as Nebraska moved into scoring position for a game winning field goal by Coyle with but 1:46 left.

The fanatical determination of Terry Luck was matched in the game only by that of Tony Davis, who supplied the running power in all three Nebraska drives. Davis ran for 126 yards, including the game's longest run of 40 yards, to be named the offensive player of the game. Davis also was the offensive player

of the game a year earlier in the Cotton Bowl.

In all my days of following football, the two second-half marches that the Huskers put on will always be remembered from the standpoint of the Husker fans really getting with it. Athletic Director Bob Devaney, who watched from the press box, remarked after the game that he couldn't get over the fact that the Nebraska fans were on their feet just about the whole last half, urging their team on. The fans literally blocked and tackled on every play and some must have been black and blue from beating each other on the back.

A couple Husker fans who were seated behind my wife and me were enjoying every minute of the last half as they passed their jars of nectar back and forth. I could sort of tell they were under the spell of some sort of medicinal spirits when I saw a mosquito bite one of them and then fly right into a brick wall.

It was an elevating win for Nebraska which had played with blackened eyes for much of the season because of losses to Missouri and Wisconsin. The 9-3 record kept Nebraska in the nation's top 10 football teams in both wire service polls. It was the fifth straight bowl win by Nebraska which approached a national record. After some painful moments during the season, Nebraska players left the playing field in New Orleans with their heads held as high as any of the great teams of the past.

1ST TEAM ALL-AMERICAN HONORS

All-American: David Humm, quarterback; Marvin Crenshaw, offensive tackle; Rik Bonness, offensive center.



Eric Strand, son of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Strand of Columbus and Andra Franklin reviewing the Husker prospects for 1980.

Chapter 20

Another Try for No. 1—1975

The phrase “rebuilding year” was only a Nebraska football memory by 1975. Under Bob Devaney and Tom Osborne, the rebuilding years had been eliminated. The football program, built by intensive recruiting and the strongest walk-on program in the country, was tapered to provide a crop of fine athletes, year-after-year. Yet recruiting had become more difficult. By 1975, the NCAA placed strict recruiting limitations on schools. The lofty goal of the new rules was to control heavy recruiting pressures colleges were placing on high school athletes. But an ulterior motive was to give such high school-talent rich states such as California, Texas, Ohio and Michigan an edge over schools such as Nebraska which could not rely on its sparsely-populated home turf for all of its athletes. Osborne spoke out against the NCAA restrictions: cutting scholarships and recruiting visits. He noted limiting the scholarships hurt educational opportunities for athletes as much as it did football programs in sparsely-populated states.

But the recruiting scholarship limits were dark clouds for the future. The sun was shining brightly at the start of the 1975 season. Quarterback Dave Humm had been graduated, but Sugar Bowl hero Terry Luck and University of California transfer Vince Ferragamo were waiting in the wings. Tony Davis was in his senior year and expectations were high for sophomore Monte Anthony. The Minnesota Twins — linebacker Tom Ruud and Bob Nelson — were gone and so was the Nebraska offensive line. But Nebraska picked up other key college transfers, including Jimmy Burrow from Mississippi, Dean Gissler from the Air Force Academy, and Ray Phillips from Marshalltown Junior College, formerly coached by Herb Taylor, former Grand Island prep coach.

Those four transfers developed into a cloud of controversy before the start of the season. The Huskers had misinterpreted an NCAA rule that transfer students could not be suited up in bowl games until they became eligible as athletes. The Husker coaching staff, aware that it was legal to take a red-shirt to any football game as long as the player didn't enter the game, figured the same rule applied to transfer students. Ferragamo,



Dean Gissler — from a family of great athletes.

Burrow, Gissler and Phillips were all taken to the Sugar Bowl even though none played. Osborne admitted the mistake, and Nebraskans braced for NCAA disciplinary action. Since there was no intentional deception, the penalty was light. The four players were ruled ineligible to play in the 1975 opener.

The opponent for that game was Louisiana State University. Since all four players went on to be Husker starters that year, the absence of the transfer players was noticed. But Terry Luck worked with a brand-new offensive line and directed a drive that he capped with a five-yard pass to wide receiver Bobby Thomas. The touchdown had to stand up until Mike Coyle booted a 37-yarder in the third quarter for a 10-0 lead. The Baton Rouge Bengals fought back on a 10-yard TD run by Pat Lyons, once unsuccessfully recruited by Nebraska. But the Huskers held on to a 10-7 win, a bitter defensive struggle in the fourth quarter.

With Dave Butterfield scoring a touchdown on a pass interception on the first play of the game and the Husker offense piling up 300 yards rushing and 170 passing, Nebraska stomped Indiana 45-0 one week later. That win was followed by a 56-14 win over Texas Christian University, and the offensive

unit compiled 517 total yards. Former Husker coach Carl Selmer brought his Miami Hurricanes to town the following week and the former Big Red mentor was hoping for an upset at the half as the Floridians built a 9-7 edge. But Vince "the Prince" Ferragamo put on his first big offensive show for Nebraskans, hitting eight of nine passes for 127 yards in a 21-16 comeback win.

With four wins safely tucked away, Nebraska opened its Big Eight season against wishbone quarterback Nolan Cromwell and the Kansas Jayhawks. Stopping Cromwell was a tough task, but the Blackshirts held the KU wishbone scoreless and Mike Coyle booted three field goals while quarterback Terry Luck came off the bench to fire a 26-yard pass to tight end Brad Jenkins, now coach at Scottsbluff, for a 16-0 win.

Nebraska was 5-0, but all of those games were played in friendly Memorial Stadium. The first away game was at Stillwater where the always dangerous Cowboys lurked. A cliff-hanger was expected and it materialized. When Terry Luck was injured early in the game, Vince Ferragamo came off the bench to throw four touchdown passes in a 28-20 win. Defensive back Chuck Jones made some brilliant plays later in the game when OSU was threatening after a bad Husker snap to the punter to emerge the game's hero.

The Colorado game that year was the weekend that Doug Looney of *Sports Illustrated* paid Lincoln and Grand Island a visit for a story on the Huskers and also one on myself. He gave me my greatest honor ever, by calling me College Football's No. 1 Fan. I know a lot of other good fans who should have had this same honor such as Dean Kratz, Omaha Attorney; Clarence Mitchell, the Lincoln insurance man; Wayne Hogg, retired Omaha oil tycoon; Bert Newton, Lincoln booster; John Roby, retired Lincoln business man and a former Husker letterman in both football and track, and many others too numerous to mention.

The personable Looney has to be one of the finest individuals I've ever known and working with him a couple of days will always be classed among my all time thrills. Interestingly enough, Doug is a Colorado alumnus, and I figured his allegiance might be to the Buffaloes during the game. But he remained professionally neutral. He later proved he wasn't just being polite. About a year ago, he accepted hard feelings with the Colorado coaching staff to remain journalistically dedicated

because of an article he wrote about the Colorado football program.

At the time of the game I was trying to ham it up for Doug but I was quickly jolted from my seat when on the first play from scrimmage, Colorado quarterback Dave Williams broke clear for a 74-yard touchdown. I was afraid that a *Sports Illustrated* writer was going to have to watch a grown man cry, but the play was the only noise Colorado made the rest of the way. Astoundingly, Nebraska scored 21 points in each of the game's first three quarters as the Big Red took an easy 63-21 win. Substitute I-Back Dave Gillespie racked up 106 yards on 22 carries in the win.

The momentum carried over a week later into the Missouri game where the 7-0 Huskers played before the national television audience. Nebraska was leading 10-7 in this game with 6:34 remaining in the first half. Inside Missouri territory Nebraska dropped back into punt formation. What happened next is known as the "Bummeroosky." It was a play that coach Osborne had resurrected from a Nebraska game played decades earlier and it worked so well the cameramen were fooled and nobody ever saw what happened on their television sets. Randy Lessman had dropped back to kick. Tony Davis stood in front of him to block. Lined up on either side of the center were backs John O'Leary and Monte Anthony, also positioned to block. But the football was snapped to Davis instead of Lessman. Tough Tony handed the ball forward to O'Leary through the New Yorker's legs. Then Davis pivoted and faked a handoff to Anthony circling behind him. The Missouri defenders were confused. ABC television cameramen were confused. Announcer Keith Jackson, trying to call the play, was confused. For two startling seconds, nobody knew where the football was. Finally, a camera picked up O'Leary streaking down the sideline. He was crossing the goal line while most Tiger defenders were still standing flat-footed.

The touchdown demoralized Missouri. After the half, Ferragamo arched a pair of his radar-controlled passes to Bobby Thomas for 37-yard and 61-yard scores. While fans in the stadium explained the Bummeroosky play to each other, Nebraska went on to a 30-7 win.

With a hard-fought 12-0 win over Kansas State and a much easier 52-0 win over Iowa State, the 10-0 Huskers earned the No. 3 rating in the nation. The same afternoon of the Cyclone

game, No. 2 Oklahoma rallied to edge Missouri 28-27 to set up a showdown for the conference title and the Orange Bowl. No. 1 Alabama was making headlines that year by trying to avoid playing either Big Eight powerhouse by going to the Sugar Bowl. It was after the Iowa State game that Osborne issued a challenge to Bryant when he told reporters, "Tell that son-of-a-buck not to duck us." Osborne later apologized to Bryant for the "tongue in cheek" remark. He had made the statement out of frustration. Bryant's intentions to avoid the Orange Bowl and Big Eight teams that year were quite clear. It was of some solace to Nebraska fans that the Bear's strategy backfired. Notre Dame upset the Crimson Tide in the Sugar Bowl.

If there ever was a team that wanted to win a national championship badly, it was Nebraska's 1975 squad. The players were very close to their coach. They wanted to help him out of the long shadow cast by Devaney. The players believed a national championship would enable Coach Osborne to receive the true recognition they felt he deserved. The problem of course, was that the players wanted the win too badly. The practices for the Oklahoma game were intense. The Huskers were so dedicated to their cause that they voted to pass up post tournament play if they didn't win the trip to the Orange Bowl.

Every Nebraskan was bent on revenge, recalling that Oklahoma had ruined things for the No. 2-rated Huskers a year earlier. Every ticket in Norman for sale — buy, beg or scalp — was grabbed by NU fans. A blizzard hit Nebraska during midweek, but I was in a group that vowed to make the journey south, if we had to do it by dogsled. Dick Stansbury, once a track star for the great Ed Weir, former Lincoln Northeast strongboy Louis Swift and Chuck Seckman of Omaha — who met me at York — were my companions and we journeyed to Soonerland just as determined as the players.

In an Oklahoma City motel, we dined and shared coffee and conversation with Mr. Football announcer Lyell Bremser and sidekick Dave Blackwell. Dean Kratz, another NU track star, and several other former Big Red greats were at the table. In fact, the only prominent figure missing might have been Racquel Welch. After an hour or two of careful deliberation, this brain trust had the Nebraska win all figured out. We knew that Ferragamo could pick their secondary clean. We all felt that the combined power of Davis, O'Leary and Anthony would keep the Sooner defense scrambling all day and the OU

wishbone on the sidelines. We carefully laid out the game plan in case Coach Osborne might want to contact one of us for a play or two. When we called it a night, I felt exhilarated when some of my crowd told me they had never seen me so optimistic before a Nebraska-Oklahoma shootout.

Our theories were sound enough. But we never pondered the intangibles. The Nebraska players wanted the win too bad. Oklahoma, which had beaten Nebraska three straight times since the game of the decade in 1971, entered the game in a much more relaxed state of mind. The hypertension of the Husker players showed in the statistics. There were six turnovers. The Oklahoma wishbone scored on five of them and showdowns and matchups we pictured the night before never materialized. It was not for lack of effort that Nebraska lost. Clete Pillen, a great Nebraska linebacker, was carried off the field early in the game but came back to be the leading tackler. Tony Davis was at his best, pounding into the Sooner line. But the turnovers resulted in a 35-10 Oklahoma win. Another chance to beat the Sooners fell by the wayside.

Fiesta Bowl

The Nebraska players were stunned and hurt after the Oklahoma game. Coach Osborne knew his players needed a way to rid themselves of the bitter taste of the defeat. The only way to spit out the poison was to play another game. He kept the lines of communication open to Fiesta Bowl officials. Arizona State, the Western Athletic Conference champion, badly wanted to play a powerhouse such as Nebraska to prove its football worthiness to the country. So Fiesta Bowl officials in Tempe, Ariz., were very interested in Nebraska and overlooked the Huskers' decision not to play in a postseason game. When the Fiesta Bowl officials extended an invitation, Husker players met again and had a change of heart.

A few days in the Arizona sunshine did quite a bit to erase the unhappy memories of the Oklahoma defeat. The players enjoyed the activities of the gala event but many were preoccupied with the game. Many of the players kept a serious look in their eye and there was an unpleasant feeling that accompanied me during my stay in the southwest that year. I always felt the Fiesta Bowl was a game that Nebraska wasn't destined to win.

Nebraska was going for an unprecedented seven straight

bowl wins. But there was a foreboding in the air. The day of the game started on a very sad note. While eating breakfast in a motel, I ran into a couple of fine fans, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Yowell of York. Jerry, now gone himself, was one of the great distance running coaches in the state. This day he relayed to me the tragic news that the daughter of two close York friends, Dr. Harold and Gale Nordland, had been killed in an automobile accident.

The news took my mind completely away from the game. The remainder of the day was very difficult. Most unhappily, it was an extremely tough day for Nebraska players. They played hard and well but the game was an uphill struggle. Nebraska had little to gain by beating Arizona State, while the Sun Devils were shooting high in the ratings. Dan Kush, son of Arizona State coach Bill Kush, booted a pair of field goals to offset an NU scoring drive, capped on a one-yard run by Anthony. Kush booted his second field goal with no time left in the first half and the Huskers held a slim 7-6 lead at the half.

Anthony scored again in the third quarter on a four-yard run as Nebraska went ahead 14-6, but Arizona State finally mounted a scoring drive against the tough Blackshirts early in the final quarter. Nebraska seemed to have solved the attack, but quarterback Fred Mortensen fired a 10-yard pass to the great John Jefferson. On a two-point PAT, he found the mark again to tie the score. Then, with 4:50 remaining, young Kush booted his third field goal of the day, a 29-yarder.

Nebraska fought to the very end. Luck, hitting 12 of 22 passes for 90 yards in a replacement role for Ferragamo at quarterback, led the Huskers to the ASU 31 before missing on a pair of throwing tries. On third down he found Tony Davis at the 21. Tough Tony took in the high pass but was hit hard by two defenders and fumbled and Nebraska lost 17-14. It was a tough way for Tony to bow out. That same day he had established an all-time Husker rushing mark of 2,445 yards, 25 more than Jeff Kinney gained in 1969-71.

The only teams to beat Nebraska that year, Oklahoma and Arizona State finished No. 1 and 2. Nebraska dropped to No. 9. After the game, my family and I had a two-mile walk back to my motel. It was the longest hike I've ever experienced. Some Arizona State fans were very rude and I felt we had lost 60-0 by their snide remarks. For a while, I didn't have a good taste in my mouth about Tempe but since then I have made several

speaking appearances in the southwest and have come to know the truly warm and friendly people of the Phoenix area.

By the game's end, many Nebraskans argued that the Huskers should have stood by their original decision not to play in a postseason bowl game. That kind of 20-20 hindsight is strictly for Monday morning quarterbacks. A bowl win was the only medicine available for the Huskers of 1975, who had tried so hard to make it to the top. My heart has always gone out to the many fine seniors on that team. They came so close, but the game wasn't horseshoes or hand grenades. The Husker players were disconsolate about a 10-2 season, finer than most of the many great seasons in the school's football history. But the great season had ended in two successive losses and the pain of not achieving the highest of all goals did not so easily go away. Before the season, the media saw the Huskers in a rebuilding year. But the players had always felt they could be No. 1.

ALL-AMERICAN

All-Americans: Rik Bonness, center; Bob Martin, defensive end; Wonder Monds, defensive back.

1976

Nebraska had most of its team returning from the bitter disappointment of the 1975 Fiesta Bowl and football writers across the country took notice. Most of them picked Nebraska as the team to beat that year, No. 1 in the country. It was a tribute that Coach Tom Osborne and his staff didn't welcome. But there was no denying the Huskers had the credentials. Vince Ferragamo was back with a veteran line that included 277-pound Bob Lingenfelter at one tackle and North Platte's Dan Schmidt at one guard. All-American Rik Bonness was gone at center, but that was a position where Nebraska always came up with first-rate players and Omahan Tom Davis was no exception.

On defense, Ron Pruitt returned from a broken leg that kept him out of the 1975 season and teamed with Lincolnite Mike Fultz to give the Big Red the best tackle tandem in the nation. Coloradoan Jim Butterfield, at defensive back, Ray Phillips at end and linebacker Clete Pillen were other great defensive stars. At the other defensive end, sophomore George Andrews of Omaha was a rising star. With Dave Shamblin,

Bobby Thomas, Chuck Malito and Ron Nitzel of Grand Island, Nebraska was as deep in wide receivers as it had ever been.

But Nebraska had to open the season in a stadium as *famous* as any for trapping mighty teams. Nebraska had to travel to Baton Rouge, La., and play Louisiana State in the Tiger Pit. A crowd of 70,000 was in a screaming frenzy on a steamy southern night, hoping to watch their Bengals upset the nation's No. 1 team and avenge a couple of recent losses to the Big Red. Nebraska started well-poised, however, taking the opening kickoff and marching downfield for the game's first score, Ferragamo tossing a touchdown pass to tight end Ken Spaeth. The snap on the extra point try was bobbled, however, and that was the end of Nebraska's scoring for the night. A fired-up LSU defense completely bogged down the Huskers. The NU Blackshirts were just as tough on the Tigers but twice, LSU moved in close enough for field goals and the game ended in a 6-6 tie. The outcome almost had a dramatic turnabout when in the final seconds defensive end Ray Phillips intercepted a pass and lateraled the football to linebacker Jim Wightman, who returned the football to the end zone. But the officials avoided a home-crowd riot by ruling Phillips had stepped out of bounds as time ran out.

These were the days when I was doing my radio show with KRGH of Grand Island and my co-host was Gary Sadlemyer, the velvet-voiced personality now with KFAB in Omaha, where he is known as the greatest thing to come out of Minnesota since prohibition days. At the start of the season, I had an elaborate trip south planned with my wife in our little "Big Red" van. Our plan after the LSU tie was to journey on to New Orleans and up the coast to Mobile, cut across Alabama to say hello to the "Bear" and then travel north to Cincinnati to watch a couple of baseball games played by my favorite team, the Reds. By the week's end we planned to motor on to Bloomington, for the Huskers' next head-knocker with Indiana.

The week's trip meant I would be away from Grand Island during my radio show, so Gary and I arranged to do a remote program at noon Sunday from New Orleans for broadcast at a later time. Though somewhat depressed by the tie, we arrived at New Orleans on schedule and my wife and I had a late breakfast and began looking for a phone booth to make this all-important call back to Grand Island. Once I had the booth spotted, I bought some southern papers looking for something

encouraging that might have been printed about our 6-6 tie. But such articles were non-existent, and I admit I was so down after the tie that even a couple Bourbon Street panhandlers offered to take me out for a cup of coffee.

As the hour of my call rapidly approached, I tried to steady my disposition to offer some encouraging remarks on the balance of the season. My wife, not so avid a fan, was absolutely right when she told me the tie was better than a loss. She assured me it would help Nebraska in its quest to live up to a preseason billing of No. 1. I had informed her that *Playboy* magazine, regarded as the most accurate pigskin preseason poll, had written that it was the year of the Husker. My wife allows me to buy one edition of the magazine each year, the one with the college football poll. But she first tears out the centerfold picture and sends it to her 84-year-old uncle so his family can unfold it for him each morning to get his heart started.

Finally, it was time to make that call and I headed for my phone booth at one of the downtown motels in the French Quarter. I took a few minutes psyching myself to be worthy of conversation with Gary, the Third City Impresario par excellence. The phone booth was open and I worried about the background noise but finally decided it might even add to the atmosphere of the show and I made my call.

When I reached Gary, he warned me that my transmission wasn't very good so I would have to talk up. Each time I raised my voice, Gary would say, "Louder!" so eventually I was shouting in the phone, trying to take a very optimistic view of the dismal tie. I told him that Nebraska had a letdown after scoring its first touchdown and that the humidity and heat and the wild LSU crowd all drained our team's momentum. I said I was certain if we were to play again that Nebraska would win and I would back that talk up, by betting my most priceless possession, my original Marilyn Monroe calendar.

While talking, I began to notice a chap, sipping more than his share of Bourbon Street's "Nectar of the Gods." He seemed particularly interested in my end of the phone interview and kept edging closer to my open phone booth. As I talked into the phone, he began to rebut my comments and also seemed to want to talk into the phone. His breath could have started a windmill in an old Dutch painting.

Finally, I frantically signaled to my wife to visit with him and do whatever was necessary to get the drunk away from me.

She responded by visiting with him and asking him about the landmarks, hoping he was a native of the Queen City. During a commercial break, I tried to whisper to my wife to tell the intruder she was a Nebraska Go-Go dancer looking for employment. What I feared most was that Sadlemyer would figure out what was happening on my end of the line and burst into laughter. His laugh is highly contagious and he is one fellow who can trigger me into hysterics, if I'm not careful. But I swallowed some air and choked out the rest of the interview and Gary kept his wisecracks to a minimum.

As I hung up the phone, my drunken friend returned to tell me in a slurring voice that he noticed by the "N" on my cap and the tone of my conversation that I was one of the Nebraska coaches. He figured I was in trouble with some of my superiors for the tie the previous evening and wanted to help defend me. That apparently was why he kept repeating, "You guys could beat that LSU bunch nine times out of 10!" To this I certainly agreed, but I kept repeating to him that I was not a coach and there wasn't enough money in Louisiana to get me into such a hectic profession.

As he teetered out the door back onto Bourbon Street, the last thing he slurred was, "You guys could beat that LSU bunch nine times out of 10!" I admitted the game I wanted to win was the one the night before.

Several years later I returned to New Orleans for the National Speakers Association Convention and stayed at the same Bourbon Street motel. I swear I met the dude again. However, this time I was minus my Big Red hat and was able to slip by him. But he was as helpful as ever to those around him, possibly drinking from the same jar and repeating the same phrase, "A few toddies for the body."

With some happiness, we drove on to Cincinnati, took in my baseball games and arrived in Bloomington. Our traveling party was stunned to see so many signs reading, "Go Big Red." I believe in hospitality but I thought this was ridiculous. Finally, it dawned on me that the Hoosiers wore red, too. But there also was a rare friendliness in this midwestern city. And the atmosphere became even more homey when many Nebraskans began arriving. The wonderful parents of Ted Harvey and Mr. and Mrs. Monte Kiffin, Sr., all had arrived from Lexington while the Marvin Sinners, the pride of Harvard, were other Nebraskans among the many who made the road trip.

When the team arrived, Indiana athletic director Paul Dietzel had a pep band at the Husker motel along with a fine welcoming committee. The beautiful people from Indiana U. are some of the warmest human beings I've encountered. The Huskers weren't the perfect guests at game time, taking a 45-13 rout. Monte Anthony and Rick Berns ran well while Ferragamo hit eight of 12 passes and linebacker Jim Wightman turned in 11 tackles.

In the third week that season, Nebraska finally played a home game in which it spotted the Horned Frogs 10 quick points and then took advantage of seven turnovers in a 64-10 win over Texas Christian University. Dave Butterfield returned a punt 87 yards for a touchdown and Ferragamo tied a school record by throwing for four touchdowns, all in the first half as Nebraska rolled to a 38-10 advantage. Fifth string I-Back Byron Stewart was the game's leading rusher and 76 Huskers saw action.

For the second straight year, former Nebraska coach Carl Selmer and his Miami Hurricanes entered Memorial Stadium to try to upset Nebraska. The game was one of the most physical Nebraska had played and a 49-yard drive by Nebraska, capped by a 32-yard pass from Ferragamo to Chuck "Skeeter" Malito, countered a 6-0 Miami lead at the half. The game went into the fourth quarter 7-6 but Al Eveland, the Ames assassin, kicked a pressure field goal and then Ferragamo found Dave Shamblin in the end zone as Nebraska won 17-9.

The season had been a physical one so far for the Huskers



Chuck Malito — "a credit to any football program"

and a Big Eight opener in Boulder was no exception. While both sides bruised each other hard, CU placekicker Mark Zetterberg put four field goals on the board on boots of 50, 46, 37 and 29 yards as Colorado took a 12-7 lead at the half. But his fifth attempt, a 21-yard chip shot, was blocked by cornerback Dave Butterfield, a native Coloradoan, to help Nebraska to a 24-12 win. Rich Berns posted 127 yards in the contest.

Four Husker starters — Monte Anthony, Dodie Donnell, Dan Schmit and Tony Samuel — were injured but the crippled Big Red still crushed Kansas State 51-0. The Blackshirts set a school record by holding the Wildcats to a minus 45 yards rushing. Ferragamo again tied a school record by throwing four touchdown passes. Eighty players got in the game.

The 5-0-1 Huskers were just about convinced they could be vying for a national title at season's end despite the LSU tie when Missouri dashed all hopes. The game was a see-saw battle all day but Nebraska was leading 24-23 in the final quarter when Missouri quarterback Pete Woods found Joe Stewart open for a desperation 98-yard touchdown pass. Ferragamo's 191-yard day passing and 14 tackles by linebacker Wightman went for naught in the 34-24 Missouri win.

The next week, Nebraska took the loss out on Kansas in a 31-3 win. The defense, smarting from the 34 points the week before, allowed the Jayhawks to cross midfield only once.

Oklahoma State provided Memorial Stadium with another nail-biter but this time the ending was happier for the Huskers. The Cowboys at 3-1 were having their most promising season ever behind running back Terry Miller. Nebraska missed two scoring chances because of turnovers while Oklahoma State managed just a field goal in the first half for a 3-0 lead. Finally, Ferragamo found dependable Chuck Malito three times on a Husker drive, the last being for a 34-yard touchdown. But the All-American Miller put on a great running display as the Cowboys went back in front 10-7. Then in the last quarter, Ferragamo engineered the winning Husker drive and hit tight end Ken Spaeth on a six-yard touchdown throw for a 14-10 margin. Linebacker Clete Pillen was the national defensive player of the week by making 30 tackles in the win.

The Big Eight race was the most contested ever in 1976. Nebraska was not the only team to taste conference upsets. In fact, there had been so many upsets that Nebraska had the opportunity to clinch at least a share of the Big Eight with a

win in Ames, Iowa, that year. But Iowa State coach Earl Bruce and his community lay in waiting. A street in Ames had been painted in the Iowa State school colors. All week long Bruce had said that Ferragamo wouldn't be able to call out audibles at the line of scrimmage because ISU fans would drown him out. And sure enough, the student body used loud-speakers. After the game Ferragamo told reporters that he complained to the officials several times about the noise level but they told him "that is what college football is all about." The crowd noise may have been the reason, but Nebraska committed eight fumbles and lost the ball on a pass interception in a 37-28 loss.

The defeat completely clouded the bowl picture. Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri, Oklahoma State and Iowa State each had a chance for an Orange Bowl bid. As usual though, the season went down to the Nebraska-Oklahoma game.

It was a cold day and a bitter wind howled through the north end zone of Memorial Stadium as the Huskers and Sooners readied for battle before a national television audience. For one of their few recent matchups, the Huskers entered the game a slight favorite. And though the Sooners held a 7-3 lead at the half, Nebraska put together a pair of third-quarter scores on a nine-yard run by Curtis Craig and a four-yard burst by Rick Berns. Elvis Peacock broke away for a 50-yard run early in the final quarter to cut the lead 17-13, but Nebraska seemed to have the Sooners bottled up with four minutes to play.

But the normally run-oriented Sooners put together two razzle-dazzle plays to pull off the upset 20-17. Wishbone quarterback Thomas Lott handed off to back Woodie Shepherd who then threw a 47-yard pass to end Steve Rhodes to move the ball to the Nebraska 35. Coach Barry Switzer then sent backup Dean Belvins in to call a pass play. On third and 19, Blevins passed to Rhodes, who this time pitched the ball back to the streaking Peacock. He dashed to the Nebraska two and scored in the final seconds on the next play. Those were the only two Oklahoma passes completed in the game but they covered 79 yards.

Don Bryant, the NU publicity man, was standing on the sidelines when Peacock took the pitchout on the flea-flicker play and Fox later said he never came so close to tackling a runner as on that critical play.

While the Orange Bowl extended an invitation to Oklahoma, Nebraska settled for a trip to the Astro-Bluebonnet

Bowl. But the real holiday trip that year was when the Big Red and a record 18,000 fans traveled to Hawaii where the Huskers destroyed the Rainbows 68-3. Ferragamo threw his 19th and 20th touchdown passes in the win and broke Humm's 1972 season record of 18 TD passes.

Astro-Bluebonnet Bowl

The team picked at the start of the season to be the national champion limped into the Bluebonnet Bowl with an 8-3-1 record. It had been a physical year. During nonconference games with LSU and Miami, key Cornhuskers had been injured and they were either sidelined or less than full-strength during important league battles. But teams are judged by their reputation, not by their injury lists. Every time Nebraska didn't win that season, the loss was called an upset. The players, once shooting for a national title, showed twinges of disappointment by the season's end. A headline in the Grand Island Independent sports pages asked, "Will NU season taste better with Bluebonnet on it?"

Shortly before the game, Nebraska defensive co-ordinator Monte Kiffin had been contacted about a similar job at Arkansas. He tried hard to ready his Blackshirts for the bowl game but his anticipated departure was a letdown. The game turned out to be an offensive show and the most exciting of the holiday season.

Quarterback Rodney Allison of Texas Tech collected 282 yards in total offense in the see-saw battle while native Texan Rick Berns countered with 118 rushing and Ferragamo hit 13 of 23 passes for 183 yards for Nebraska.

The Blackshirts didn't have their best night but tackle Ron Pruitt stopped a last-quarter Red Raider drive by sacking Allison for a loss and forcing him to cough up the football. Reg Gast recovered the fumble to seal the win for Nebraska. Indeed the game did add some taste to the season for the Huskers. Ferragamo finished his illustrious career with 22 touchdown passes that season. His final one, the game winner, went to Skeeter Malito, who caught three passes in the win for 107 yards in our 27-24 win.

ALL-AMERICANS

All-Americans: Mike Fultz, defensive tackle; Dave Butterfield, defensive back; Vince Ferragamo, quarterback.



Before the Indiana game at Bloomington with James Wightman, Larry Young and myself.



Weight Coach Boyd Epley a vital part of our great success on the gridiron.

Chapter 21

Still a Contender

In 1977, Nebraska faced an unusual transition. The team that had virtually eliminated rebuilding years because of so many talented players now had to make some adjustments. The team was as veteran as usual but there were new faces on the coaching staff. Lance Van Zandt, who had coached at Kansas and Oklahoma State, was the new defensive coordinator, while Charlie McBride was the new coach of the defensive line.

Nebraska still wasn't adjusted when former NU coach Warren Powers brought Washington State to town and stunned the Huskers in Memorial Stadium 19-10. Nebraska won the statistics but fumbled three times inside the Cougar 10 and lost the ball on a fumbled punt to set up one of the visitors' scores. Despite scoring just 10 points, Nebraska had rolled up 470 yards total offense.

Nebraska may have also been caught looking ahead to its next opponent, Alabama. Before a national television audience, the Huskers turned back a fine Tide team 31-24. It was a superb offensive effort by both sides. With Alabama leading 7-3, Osborne ordered Nebraska to execute a fake field goal and the gamble led to a 10-7 Nebraska lead after one quarter.

Jeff Rutledge teamed up with Alabama's fine Ozzie Newsome during a drive that put the Tide back out front 14-10. But Randy Garcia, the Nebraska quarterback I once described on my radio show as being able to throw a football through a car wash without getting it wet, lobbed a swing pass to I-Back I.M. Hipp on a 53-yard play while Berns piled over two plays later to return the lead to Nebraska. With 10 seconds left in the first half, Alabama tied the score 17-17 on a field goal.

At half time, aspirin bottles and tranquilizers were outselling the popcorn. But the show was just beginning. Coloradoan Lee Kunz intercepted a pass. Berns then broke loose on a 22-yard run and Curtis Craig broke free for the final 17-yards of a go-ahead touchdown drive. Alabama fought back to tie the score in the final quarter, but Nebraska marched 80 yards with Berns hurtling his body high in the air to cross the goal on the winning score. In the win, thoroughbred Berns



Lee Kunz — also Big-Eight discus champ

rushed for 128 yards, caught three passes and scored three touchdowns.

When a first-quarter injury sidelined Berns the next week, running mate I.M. Hipp picked up the gauntlet in Nebraska's 31-10 win over Baylor. He rushed for 122 yards.

On Osborne's 40th birthday, Oct. 1 1977, Hipp made his way into national headlines by running for 254 yards in a 31-13 win over Indiana. That broke a school record of 211 yards by Berns against Hawaii in 1976. Actually, the game was closer than the score showed. The Hoosiers kept the game in doubt until the final 10 minutes when the Blackshirts thwarted a gamble on fourth down.

Hipp, the new soph sensation, scored on runs of 66 and 82 yards while Kenny Brown ran a flashy 27-yard reverse as Nebraska beat Kansas State 26-9 the following week.

Nebraska was bent on revenge when Iowa State came calling the next week. But Iowa State's Dexter Green broke loose on several draw plays on crucial third downs to lead a 24-21 stunner, the second straight win by the Cyclones over the Huskers. Despite the loss, Hipp was over 100 yards for the fourth straight week. He gained 165.

The Buffs also jumped to a 15-3 lead over Nebraska the next week but Hipp broke loose for 172 yards in a 33-15 Nebraska win. National television was on hand to watch a showdown between Hipp and Heisman Trophy candidate Terry Miller in the Oklahoma State game the next week. Miller barely made his 100 yards and Hipp was held to 71, breaking his five-game string. But Hipp scored on runs of 10 and one yards and Nebraska won the game 31-14. Then at Missouri, Nebraska won 21-10 as the Blackshirts bottled up Tiger passer Pete Woods. Against Kansas, all sorts of feats were accomplished in a 52-7 win. Kicker Billy Todd booted a 55-yard field goal to tie a mark set by Paul Rogers in 1969. The Husker offense also set a single game rushing record of 550 yards. Hipp rushed for 200, Berns added 107 and tiny Tim Wurth of Omaha gained 90.

Now 8-2, Nebraska once again turned its attention to Oklahoma. National television was on hand but this time, national title contender Oklahoma was the favorite. Nebraska played well in the first quarter but failed to capitalize and Oklahoma waltzed to a 38-7 win. The lop-sided score almost overshadowed a 23-tackle performance by linebacker Lee Kunz.

Liberty Bowl

A pair of upsets and the Oklahoma loss kept Nebraska away from the major bowls. But the Big Red was still in high demand. Nebraska made its first trip to the Liberty Bowl to take on North Carolina in a game billed as a showdown between I.M. Hipp and their frosh star, "Famous Amos" Lawrence. But the bowl turned into Nebraska's fourth straight cliff-hanger.

Not until quarterback Randy Garcia came off the bench late in the game and drilled a 34-yard pass to a diving end Tim Smith in the end zone did Nebraska take a 21-17 win. The game was tied 7-7 at the half but North Carolina jumped to a 17-7 lead in the third quarter.

Husker heroics came later in the game. Linebacker Lee Kunz tipped a pass by quarterback Matt Kupec and tackle Barney Cotton made a diving catch for an interception. Then Garcia entered the game to lead a 74-yard drive that ended in a touchdown pass to Curtis Craig. The Tar Heels were moving for a clinching score when Kupec fumbled at the Nebraska 43 and tackle Dan Pensick fell on the loose football. Six plays later Garcia threw the game-winning touchdown for the 21-17 win.

The ending score illustrated that "players of the game" should never be chosen until the contest is ended. Kupec was named the player of the game, though he ended up as the losing quarterback. Kupec had a fine night, hitting seven of 11 passes for 75 yards and a pair of touchdowns. But his fourth quarter fumble and pass interception actually made him more of a goat than a hero. Overlooked were the heroics of Garcia, who came off the bench to direct the comeback win and the effort of starter Tom Sorley, who hit 11 of 13 passes for 105 yards and Husker bowl completion record of .846.

Oh well, a trophy is a trophy. Kupec took home the individual hardware but Nebraska took home its eighth bowl trophy in nine contests. Osborne had won four of his first five bowl games.

ALL-AMERICAN

All-American: Tom Davis, center.



Tim Smith and his beautiful wife Bev. — "An All-American couple"

1978

Many seniors from the team that had been touted the year before as national champions were graduated by the time 1978 rolled around. Six offensive linemen had been drafted by the National Football League. But coach Tom Osborne has never been a man of overstatement, and Nebraska fans took special interest when he announced before the season: "I think we're going to be much improved over last year."

Much was expected from I-Backs I.M. Hipp and Rick Berns, perhaps the best running combination in the nation. There were rumors that one of the runners would be converted to fullback or that Nebraska would shift to a veer offense so both could play at the same time. But Osborne knew he had the best blocking fullback in the nation in the very underrated Andra Franklin of Alabama. It was the blocks of Franklin and top-notch lineman that made such great runs possible for Hipp and Berns. Osborne felt none of his three backs would be as effective in a veer formation. Nor did he want to throw away an offense that had been successful for almost two decades just because of the pressure of one season.

Nebraska's defense had changed under the coaching of Lance Van Zandt. There were more gambles by the linebackers, a shift away from the position defense under Monte Kiffin. More importantly, Van Zandt platooned his starters, feeling many defensive players for the Husker defense had just run out of gas late in the games. The defensive players liked alternating better because more of them were in the game. To the surface came such stars as defensive end George Andrews, linebacker Lee Kunz, the Big Eight Conference discus champ, monster Jim Pillen (younger brother of Clete Pillen) and middle guard Kerry Weinmaster from North Platte. On offense, a gritty quarterback from Big Spring, Texas, Tom Sorley, took the helm. Some felt Sorley wasn't as gifted as some past NU throwers, but nobody showed more determination.

Nebraska had to open the season on the road against the team rated No. 1 in the nation — Alabama. The game had been moved up to the start of the season for national television. Nebraska liked the schedule switch, hoping to come up with extra preparation for the game and to catch the Crimson Tide early. In the first quarter, the strategy seemed sound. Billy Todd booted a 48-yard field goal and Nebraska threatened for another score. But the Alabama defense stiffened and then the Tide ground out a 99-yard scoring drive that took all momentum away from the visiting Huskers. The score was 7-3 at the half but Nebraska's offense was completely stifled and Alabama added two more touchdowns in a 20-3 revenge win.

The loss didn't stop Nebraska from having its 94th straight sellout a week later and the Husker offense worked its way out of neutral in a 36-26 win over California. It took a trick play. The Golden Bears were ahead 7-0 and quarterback Sorley took

a snap from center and pitched the football to Hipp, who in turn lateraled the pigskin back to the quarterback. Then Sorley looked downfield and launched a 57-yard pass to wingback Kenny Brown to set up a tying touchdown. The game stayed close in the fourth quarter when Nebraska put on its real offensive show. Sorley hit Texas recruit Maurice McCloney on a 32-yard passing play with the talented McCloney dipping and weaving around tacklers. It was unfortunate that Maurice later was injured. He became restless not playing football and transferred to the University of Texas where he continued his fine play. But in Nebraska's first win of the season, McCloney flashed with brilliance, Hipp untracked for 154 yards rushing while Sorley passed for 190 yards.

The next week Nebraska rolled up 599 yards and eight different players scored in a 56-10 win over Hawaii. The game was a tune-up for a regionally-televised contest with Indiana. The Hoosiers were the team on the move in the Big 10 that year, but Nebraska scored the first four times it had the football in a 69-17 win. Hipp gained 123 yards and backup Tim Wurth ran for 95. Sorley again was on target for 168 yards. The Huskers arrived in Ames the next week somewhat gingerly, expecting another rough go with the Cyclones. But the Blackshirts held the great Dexter Green to just 46 yards with the tackling led by Kerry Weinmaster. That pursuit led in a shutout and Tim Wurth replaced the ailing L.M. Hipp to lead Nebraska to a 23-0 win. Back in Lincoln, Kansas State only trailed the Huskers 14-7 at the half, but Osborne steadied his team and Hipp ran for 183 yards while Sorley threw for 218 in a 48-14 romp.

The same situation happened a week later against Colorado. Howard Ballage ran back a kickoff 100 yards and the Buffs built a 14-3 advantage but Berns and Hipp rushed for 163 and 93 yards to pick apart the Colorado defense in a 52-14 win. In all, the Husker offense picked up 641 yards.

Oklahoma State had only 2-5 record and the Huskers were now rated No. 5 but the Cowboys continued to be trouble. The Cowboys scored on their first possession for a 7-0 lead before Nebraska slowly pulled away to a 19-7 lead at the half. Nebraskans settled in their seats for an easier second half but Oklahoma State promptly marched downfield to cut the lead 19-14. Billy Todd added a field goal and 22-14 seemed a safe lead late in the game. In the dying moments, however, an OSU

back broke free in the secondary on a pass play. Talented Derrie Nelson ran clear across the field from his defensive end position to pull down the player who appeared headed for a touchdown and with a 2-point play it could have ended in a tie instead of the victory.

One week later, Kansas proved as easy an opponent as Oklahoma State was difficult. The Nebraska offense set a Big Eight record of 799 yards total offense. Third string I-Back Craig Johnson rushed for 192 yards and three touchdowns while Sorley completed 10 of 11 passes for four touchdowns in a 63-21 win.

Nebraska returned to Memorial Stadium with an 8-1 record to face rival Oklahoma. It had been seven years since Nebraska had beaten Oklahoma 35-31 in the game of the Century. The burden of defeat to the Sooners had been difficult for the state to bear. It had become a millstone around the neck of Coach Osborne. One of the greatest coaches in the nation was continually questioned simply because he had never beaten the Oklahoma Sooners. But hope springs eternal. Husker fans came to the game early and tickets were not available in Lincoln. National television broadcast the dramatics to millions.

The game took the usual twists and turns and at times both defeat and victory looked inevitable for the Huskers. But the game offered no clear direction-only suspense. Quarterback Tom Sorley stared fear in the eye and never blinked as he picked himself off the field, time-after-time following crushing tackles by the Sooner defense. Rick Berns, going most of the way at I-Back, also was a man of true grit, gaining 113 yards on 25 carries, always when Nebraska needed them the most. Jimmy Pillen, who finished the game with eight tackles and two fumble recoveries, landed on a loose football on the Nebraska 3-yardline to preserve the win. The great Billy Sims was carrying the football on a game-winning drive for the Sooners when he coughed up the football with just 3:27 left. In the game, linebacker John Ruud made one of the hardest single hits ever registered on a Nebraska kickoff when he drilled the Sooner return man with a devastating tackle that jarred the ball loose on a clear-cut fumble. The official failed to see it that way however and gave the ball back to the Sooners on a call that brought the Husker faithful and the Nebraska bench to their feet. I will always remember how Tom Osborne called his troops together and instead of blowing his cool, told them that



John Ruud — "I wonder if that guy Phelps of O.U. is still on their kickoff team?"

they were going to have to play over the breaks which were going against them. It was very apparent that had the Huskers been given this fumble and could have scored again, they would have blown the Sooners out of the tub. When the gun sounded, Nebraska was a 17-14 winner and owned at least a share of the Big Eight title. Fans unleashed their emotions on the field and tore down the goal posts. After the seven-year Sooner famine there was laughter and tears. Once again, the Huskers were going to the Orange Bowl.

But the emotions and energy exerted in the Oklahoma win had been too much for the Huskers. Coach Osborne brooded before the season's final game against Missouri over a possible mental letdown. All week long Husker players remained intense, concentrated hard and took nothing for granted. Missouri is not a team to fool with. But on the first play from scrimmage, Rick Berns broke loose on an easy 82-yard run and that's when the lapse came. A large running back named James Wilder plowed through the Husker defense while a talented tight end named Kellen Winslow kept getting open for passes in key situations. Wilder couldn't be tackled by one player, and the Husker pursuit was noticeably slow. His bull-like charges combined with the short passes to Winslow to keep the NU defense

guessing all day. Only a dramatic super-human performance by Rick Berns set a school record by rushing for 237 yards. He took shots to his body that were extremely brutal, yet he continued to slash forward. When the game was over and Nebraska had lost 35-31, Berns stoically held his chipped helmet in his bloodied hands and quietly told reporters that his record meant nothing because of the loss.

Orange Bowl

Nebraska was looking for a national title showdown with No. 1 rated Penn State before the Missouri game. Now the Nittany Lions looked elsewhere for a bowl bid. The Orange Bowl committee was in a quandary over the Nebraska loss. Instead of having the top bowl matchup that year the Orange Bowl committee had to scramble for a game of interest. The committee found one and it was a shocker to the entire state. I was driving home on Interstate 80 brooding over the Missouri loss when news flashed over the radio about the Orange Bowl. The committee had extended an invitation to conference co-champion Oklahoma to set up a rematch. I almost wrecked my van. I was driving home with my good friend Dr. George Smaha, a retired Grand Island dentist, and we assured ourselves the radio flash had been a mistake.

But the news story was true and for the first time I know about, two teams — conference co-champions — squared off in a postseason game. It was a horrible situation for Coach Osborne and his staff to be in. His team had given everything it had in the 17-14 upset of the Sooners, probably too much because the win had cut into the Missouri game. Now they had to start all over again.

Osborne is at his best preparing a team to win when the odds against success are difficult. There was very little incentive to even play. But the Huskers charged onto the field ready for action and even jumped to a 7-0 lead when Sorley tossed a pass to end Tim Smith in the first quarter. But the Sooners were just too explosive and the Blackshirts just couldn't hold their offensive intensity as they had in the first matchup. Oklahoma took a 14-7 lead at the half and built the margin to 31-10 into the final quarter by scoring all three times the Sooners had the ball in the third period.

Nebraska did make a gallant comeback try in the final frame. Sorley first directed a scoring 78-yard drive and then



Tom Sorley and his dad making some mental notes before a practice. These two Texas transplants make our state a better place to live.

threw a touchdown pass to talented tight end Junior Miller. With time running out, the Huskers drove again and ended up a first down away from a miracle finish. But the Sooners prevailed 31-24. One fan sadly remarked as we left the Orange Bowl, "It is bad enough playing Oklahoma once a year but no — not twice."

It had been the year that the Huskers finally had broken the Oklahoma jinx. But even that moment had become a haunting one. It had been a great year by the Huskers, finishing 9-3.

The losses had been to formidable foes — Alabama, Oklahoma and Missouri. This team had allowed no cheap upsets. They had tasted what no other Nebraska team had tasted in seven years — a win over Oklahoma. Yet, fate had been cruel. The Sooners were given a chance to avenge that single win in the same season and there was no winter to savor the Oklahoma win. Instead the great year had ended with a loss to Nebraska's arch-rival.

1978 HONORS

Coach of the Year: Tom Osborne

All-Americans: Kelvin Clark, offensive tackle; George Andrews, defensive end.

Chapter 22

The Case for Tom Osborne— 1979

It was at the end of the 1979 season that Tom Osborne finally emerged completely from the shadow of Bob Devaney. Before the season started, Nebraskans saw Tom Osborne in a new light when they learned they were about to lose him. There was a rumor in the newspapers that Osborne was looking at a coaching offer from Colorado. He confirmed the rumor was true and Nebraskans held their breath for a weekend while the Husker coach journeyed to Boulder to take a first-hand look at the Buffs' football program. It was the first time the state had ever had to wonder what Nebraska football would be like without their underrated coach. Fortunately, the fans didn't find out. Coach Osborne decided to stay at Nebraska. And in 1979, he nearly won the national title. Nebraska looked solid at most positions that season, especially at running back where I.M. Hipp, Andra Franklin, Craig Johnson, Tim Wurth and a newcomer named Jarvis Redwine gave the Husker offense the power to virtually explode. The question mark was at quarterback. The job was wide open but as the season opened, the contention narrowed to two candidates — junior quarterback Jeff Quinn of Ord and senior signal caller Tim Hager of Lincoln.

The season opened with a much easier opponent than in some of the past years, Utah State. Fans came to the game expecting a rout but the Aggies kept the game in suspense with a 14-14 tie at the half. Nebraska exemplified a true offensive juggernaut as it got untracked after the intermission in a 35-14 win. Jeff Quinn became the first Husker quarterback to run for more than 100 yards in one game since 1964 by collecting 112. I.M. Hipp rushed for 167 yards and scored three touchdowns while newcomer Jarvis Redwine rushed for 91. Fans went home and checked with their travel agents for early bowl reservations.

The next week at Iowa, quarterback Jeff Quinn had an ineffective game and I.M. Hipp went down with an injury, but some heroes came off the bench in a 24-21 win. Craig Johnson, expected to be red-shirted, came in to carry the load on a key winning touchdown drive, while Tim Hager spelled Quinn to

direct the attack. Mark LeRoy was a defensive hero in the win. The handsome Seattle, Wash., native forced a Hawkeye fumble and made a crucial pass interception in the come-from-behind win.

National power Penn State visited Lincoln the following week and, of course, it was a natural for television. The Nittany Lions jumped to a 14-0 lead in the game but again quarterback Tim Hager came off the bench to play his finest game. Hager twice hit tight end Junior Miller for touchdowns and Nebraska scored three touchdowns in the second quarter in the 42-17 win. The two touchdowns surrendered by the Blackshirts would be the last they would yield for 20 quarters.

The shutout started against New Mexico State where Marvelous Jarvis Redwine first drew attention by gaining 120 yards in a 57-0 win. The next week, Nebraska opened Big Eight conference play with a 42-0 homecoming win over Kansas. Redwine went into the national spotlight by gaining 157 yards, but Craig Johnson provided the biggest thrill of the day when he ran off scrimmage from the Nebraska six for the longest run in Nebraska history, 94 yards. At Oklahoma State, wingback Kenny Brown looked more like Johnny Rodgers as he gained 111 yards and Redwine collected 102. Colorado finally ended Nebraska's shutout string but Nebraska won 38-10. Jarvis Redwine put in his finest game of the season, gaining 206 yards and scoring three touchdowns.

Then in Columbia, Nebraska had to pay too high a price in a 23-20 win over the Tigers. Nebraska had built a two-touchdown lead when Missouri was able to score twice within eight seconds. The Tigers drove in for a score to cut the Nebraska lead and then on the kickoff, Anthony Steele bobbled the kick and a Missouri defender pilfered the ball in midair for a second score. Still Nebraska clung to a three-point lead and though the great Missouri quarterback Bill Bradley brought the Tigers downfield for a late scoring attempt, defensive end Derrie Nelson put a crushing sack on him to end a serious scoring threat.

There were several questionable officiating calls in the game, but the most unhappy incident came after a Nebraska touchdown. Jarvis Redwine was hit on the knee by a Missouri defender on an extra point attempt. The action was away from the play and the shot forced Redwine from the game with a knee injury. The play led to some hard feelings between



Derrie Nelson and Coach Osborne plotting the game plan.

Missouri and Nebraska fans and temporarily strained the relationship of friends Tom Osborne and Warren Powers.

With both Redwine and Hipp ailing, Craig Johnson again had to carry the load against Kansas State. It was far from a pretty win but Nebraska prevailed 21-12. There were seven Husker fumbles in the win and five were lost. But "Craig the Leg" rushed for 102 yards and L.C. Cole turned in 10 tackles, recovered a fumble and returned a pass interception 60 yards to spark the win. Both Redwine and Hipp watched from the sidelines again as Nebraska boosted its record to 10-0 by smacking a pretty fair Iowa State team 34-3. Quarterback Jeff Quinn fired six passes to tight end Junior Miller and the game was never in question as Nebraska led 28-0 at the half.

That set up the annual Nebraska-Oklahoma shootout. The game attracted more interest than usual because both teams were at the top of the national ratings and unbeaten. With Jarvis Redwine less than 100 percent and Oklahoma's Billy Sims at superstar level, there was no doubt that the Sooners would be very difficult to beat on their own turf. The Huskers gamely

gave it a try in one of the greatest coaching jobs Coach Osborne or any collegiate mentor has ever given. Oklahoma clearly dominated the game but Nebraska almost pulled off an upset.

The Sooners held a 10-7 lead in the second half (the NU touchdown was on an 11-yard pass from Quinn to Redwine), when Nebraska mustered a heroic fourth-quarter scoring drive. Then outside the Oklahoma 20, Osborne called a play that resulted in right guard Randy Schleusener carrying the football. The gutsy call went like this: Quinn called the signals but never got the football. It rested still behind center Kelly Saalfeld who had surged off the line into a block. Quinn had dropped back without the football and faked a handoff to Jarvis. Meanwhile, Schleusener, a straight A student and Academic All-American, circled to his left, scooped up the loose football, and barreled into the end zone. It would be nice to say that the play led to a Nebraska 14-10 win.

There was still time on the clock for Oklahoma to move the football and though the Blackshirts played fiercely, the great Billy Sims broke loose on a long run to set up the winning touchdown. For the third straight year, the Nebraska-Oklahoma game had been settled by three points. This time Oklahoma won, 17-14.

Cotton Bowl

When coach Tom Osborne took Nebraska to the Orange Bowl as Conference co-champ the year before, it was his sixth straight postseason trip. That broke a record of five straight bowl trips by Devaney in his first five seasons as coach, before the string was interrupted in 1967. When Nebraska took its journey to Dallas for the Cotton Bowl, it was Osborne's seventh straight bowl trip. Very few coaches in the country, including Oklahoma's Barry Switzer, have the record of taking a team to a bowl game in every season they have coached.

But the bowl trips never become old hat. Nor do they become any less exciting or easier to win. In the 1980 Cotton Bowl, Osborne faced a true master, Bill Yeoman of Houston, the inventor of the veer offense. Like so many other bowl games for Osborne teams, the Nebraska-Houston confrontation went down to the wire. It was a near repetition of Nebraska's 17-14 loss to Oklahoma at the end of the regular season.

The teams played to a 7-7 tie at the half, but in the final four minutes of the game, Nebraska took a 14-10 lead when

quarterback Quinn drilled a touchdown pass to tight end Jeff Finn. But Houston marched right back down the field in less than a minute and a half. The Blackshirts gave up too much yardage too fast before stiffening inside their own 10. But on fourth down, Eric Herring of the Cougars made a whirling catch of a tipped pass for the winning score and Houston won 17-14.

After the loss, Finn noted, "We were just six points away from being national champs." Instead, Nebraska settled for a 10-2 record and a lower top 10 national rating.

My good friend Jeff Finn is absolutely right in asserting the Huskers were within six points of the title in 1979. It has been an injury here, a penalty call there or a fumble that has kept Nebraska an arm's length away from No. 1 under Osborne. I contend that it's a matter of time. Once you put the best possible players on the field and make all the right calls, you still need a little bit a luck to win them all. A couple of Osborne teams have come close. Every season, Nebraskans can always wonder, is this the year Nebraska is going to win them all? Not many college fans can be that optimistic. I always contend that all Coach Osborne needed in the past few years is a big play man of the Johnny Rodgers variety.

ALL-AMERICAN

All-American: Junior Miller.

1980

In 1980, for the third time in his eight years as Nebraska head football coach, Tom Osborne almost won it all. The Huskers were 10-0 when Nebraska ran into Oklahoma and lost 35-10 in 1975. Nebraska won 10 straight in 1979 before a heart-breaking loss to Missouri, 35-31. Both times Nebraska lost a following bowl game and finished 10-2. Nebraska finished 10-2 in 1980, another near miss. In fact, if it can be said Nebraska missed finishing No. 1 by six points in 1979, the margin of difference was seven points in 1980. Only a four-point loss to Florida State and a three-point defeat to Oklahoma kept Nebraska from contesting unbeaten Georgia for the national title.

Some fine players had graduated from the 1979 team, including tight end Junior Miller, running back Isaiah Hipp, receivers Tim Smith and Kenny Brown and offensive linemen John Havekost, Mark Goodspeed, Kelly Saalfeld, Dan Steiner.

Defensive losses included middle guard Kerry Weinmaster, tackles Bill Barnett and Rod Horn and end L.C. Cole. But running sensation Jarvis Redwine returned, while Jeff Quinn was back at quarterback. Jeff Finn capably filled the shoes of Junior Miller at tight end while end Derrie Nelson and defensive backs Sammy Sims, Russell Gary and Andy Means led the defense.

Redwine jumped to the front in the race for the Heisman Trophy by rushing for 179 yards in a 55-7 rout of Utah in the season opener. The Nebraska offense gained 672 yards and Quinn passed for 127. Second-week foe Iowa was expected to be a rough opponent but Redwine again led the way in a 57-0 thrashing. The Hawkeyes and top rusher Jeff Brown were held to just 44 yards rushing. Almost overlooked was a feature moment, when Jack Lonowski of Stromsburg, 28-years-old and the senior citizen on the Husker squad, posted a safety. Then at Penn State, on national television, end Nelson and Jimmy Williams dropped Coach Paterno's quarterbacks for 89 yards in sacks in a 21-7 win. Redwine ran the ball 34 times and gained 189 yards rushing in the win.

But just when Nebraska looked headed toward the top rating in the nation, Florida State invaded Memorial Stadium and pulled off an 18-14 upset. Nebraska jumped to a 14-0 lead but never knocked the Seminoles out of the game. The Huskers dominated the play but continued to give up the football on turnovers. The Blackshirts played brilliantly but Florida State always had field position and put up four field goals and added one touchdown drive in the upset win. On one late drive, Nebraska drove the length of the field for a go-ahead score. But just three yards short of the goal, a Florida State linebacker ran down Quinn — trying to roll out — and forced a fumble. The game was a double blow against Nebraska, as Redwine was carried from the game with broken ribs after collecting 145 yards on 25 carries. The injury knocked Redwine out of the Heisman Trophy running.

Craig Johnson, who never rushed for less than 100 yards against the Jayhawks, and sophomore Roger Craig filled the void left by Redwine in a 54-0 win over Kansas. Johnson rushed for 109 yards while Craig added 85 yards and three touchdowns. Johnson again rushed for more than 100 yards and scored three touchdowns in Nebraska's 48-7 win over Oklahoma State. The Cowboys were held to a minus 13 yards rushing. A



Roger "The Dodger" Craig — "Goal line — here I come!"

week later, sophomore Roger Craig started his first game as a Husker and rushed for 176 yards in Nebraska's 45-7 win over Colorado. The win included a 52-yard field goal by Kevin Seibel. Missouri, 6-1 going into their Nebraska encounter, tested the Huskers behind senior quarterback Phil Bradley. But York linebacker, Kim Baker, turned the game around with a 77-yard pass interception in a 38-16 win. At Kansas State, Craig gained 183 yards in a 55-8 romp. The Wildcats' high point was a conference record 93-yard punt by Dan Birdsey. Nebraska boosted its conference record to 6-0 with a 35-0 win at Ames over Iowa State. One of the touchdowns was a fumble recovery in the end zone by sophomore offensive guard Mike Mandelko of Lexington to fulfill a lineman's dream.

For once, Nebraska was the favorite in its annual encounter with Oklahoma. Fans packed Memorial Stadium hoping for a Big Eight conference title, an Orange Bowl trip and a minor miracle that still could vault the Big Red to the national title. But the only miracles made that day were by the Sooners. Redwine, who had almost vanished since his injury, exploded on an 89-yard run early in the game to give Nebraska a 7-0 lead

and then Kevin Seibel added a 47-yard field goal. But the Okies quickly scored in the second quarter to take a 14-10 lead at the half.

Nebraska went into the wind in the third quarter and held the Sooner wishbone to just seven yards. Fans were elated when the quarter ended, thinking that Nebraska would take charge once the wind was to the Huskers' backs. But the quarter was a frustrating one. Nebraska's offense played in Sooner territory, but the Oklahoma defense fought stubbornly until Quinn broke through on a short run into the end zone to put Nebraska on top 17-14.

Quinn scored quickly. The Sooner offense, shut out for the entire half, suddenly fired. A freshman named Buster Rhymes, once high on the NU recruiting list, ran a pitchout 43 yards to the Nebraska 12. A pass play advanced the ball to the Nebraska one and with time running out, Rhymes scored from the one in a 21-17 Oklahoma upset.

Once again, the Sooners headed for Miami as an Orange Bowl contender despite a less impressive overall record. The twice-beaten Nebraskans made their first trip to the Sun Bowl since 1969.

Sun Bowl

There was little to gain and much to lose in a matchup with Mississippi State in the scheduled battle at El Paso. Coach Tom Osborne was acutely aware that his Huskers might face the same letdown that had plagued his players in the 1975 Fiesta Bowl. Upset-minded Mississippi State had less talent than the Huskers but were loaded with speedy skilled players and operated from the dangerous wishbone. Any complacency or letup would mean disaster.

Osborne looked for an edge. He decided the best way to avoid retreat was to attack and in the Sun Bowl he turned his versatile offense into high gear. Quarterback Quinn hit nine of 19 timely passes and fullback Andra Franklin was the running key in a 31-17 win over Mississippi State, the team that had upset mighty Alabama during the regular season. Senior Tim McCrady of Plainview caught two passes for 107 yards in the convincing Nebraska win.

The victory was the 11th straight finish by Nebraska in the top 10 teams in the country and the eighth straight under

Osborne. It was Osborne's fifth win in eight straight bowl trips. The eight trip string was one less than the nine bowl games the great Bob Devaney posted in his 11 years at the Husker helm. At the end of the 1980 season, Osborne also ranked right behind Devaney as the all-time winningest Nebraska coach.

Jumbo Steim, 1911- 1915, compiled a .913 winning percentage, Bummy Booth, 1900-1905 finished with a .861 average. Devaney was third at .829. Osborne was fourth after the 1980 season with a .767 percentage. In eight years, his record stood at 56 wins, 17 losses and one tie. Eight of those 17 losses were to Oklahoma.

No other Nebraska coach in modern time has been as consistent as Osborne. No Husker coach has been under so much pressure to win. The red-haired coach, now into his 40's, is still a youthful man by coaching standards. He always has been wiser than his years, but few coaches have so much experience. More frequently, his name comes up when schools across the nation start looking for a coach. In 1979, Colorado courted Osborne. In 1980, he was on Notre Dame's contact list.

He is called too conservative. He is called too low key. His recruiting is questioned. Yet he designed the daring offenses of the Devaney years. He draws a fierce intensity of his players. He was the recruiting co-ordinator for Devaney when Nebraska finished No. 1 in the nation.

More importantly, Osborne brings value and worthiness to the Nebraska football program. The great Grantland Rice wrote, "When the Great Scorer comes to write against your name — He marks, not that you won or lost, but how you played the game." Tom Osborne is such a remarkable coach because he is a living tribute to those words of how he plays the game, on and off the field.

In a nation of football factories, Osborne stresses academics. Though winning is everything, Osborne still emphasizes that corny courtesy called sportsmanship. It is only a matter of time before an Osborne team wins a national title. The title, No. 1, will not come cheaply. His teams always have been willing to pay the price. Nor will the title be followed by any football scandal. Osborne and his coaching staff have always been willing to play by the rules. Osborne is still one of those coaches who believe building character is part of sports. As a man, Osborne is a living tribute to "how to play the game." It is my fervent hope that Osborne's title will be as

coach of the Huskers and not somewhere else. I sometimes joke and say I hope I see the day that Tom busts a chair over a table in a fire-eating half-time talk, but I think I say this in jest. This isn't his way and he is truly respected by all his players and coaching staff. In a world that is badly in need of heroes he is something any young man can look up to, whether he is an athlete or just a student, as Tom stands for everything good. It is a title that should be shared by all Nebraskans who love and admire him. He is Nebraska's favorite son.

ALL-AMERICAN

All-Americans: Jarvis Redwine, I-Back; Derrie Nelson, defensive end; Randy Schleusener, offensive guard, Coach Tom Osborne was named AP Big Eight Coach of the Year.



Coach Tom Osborne — a man truly respected in his profession.

Chapter 23

Fans

The Husker Fan Hall of Fame

When *Sports Illustrated* proclaimed me the Nation's No. 1 football fan back in 1975 the KGB chicken was just getting hatched in San Diego and the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders still hadn't made a movie. When Nebraska beats Oklahoma, I know fans who can outstrut any chicken or kick higher than any cheerleader. And I suppose I'd be one of them.

However there are so many dedicated Big Red rooters across the state and nation and this part of the book is about just a few of them. In fact, I've dedicated this chapter of my book to some of these great Husker fans.

The problem is that I can't begin to even touch the surface because there are so many excellent fans who have a special story to tell. So to those 76,000 fans who fill the stadium each week but didn't get in this book, remember there is going to be a sequel to this one. Besides, being a Big Red fan and following something as magnificent as this program certainly has its own rewards.

Nobody drives further to a football game than a western Nebraska football fan. If a Big Red fan lives in Henry, Neb., on the Wyoming-Nebraska panhandle state line, he must drive 450 miles to Memorial Stadium. Some Nebraska fans have driven from Texas or California or just about any state in the union to see their "Big Red" play.

There's tremendous sacrifice a Big Red fan must endure when the Nebraska autumn is about ended and winter winds come whipping across the prairie from the north. The players are warmed by the heat of the battle, but when the arctic air blows in for the late November games in Lincoln, a Big Red fan's feet can swell from the cold and his hands turn numb without feeling. But his heart is always warm.

Here then, are a few of those great fans. I wish we could have brought you all of their own personal stories.

"Big Al" McPherson
Alias — "Big Red Bleacher Bum No. 1"

Here is the beautiful McPherson family, whose love for the Huskers cannot be questioned. Al was the night sports editor of a west coast daily for more than a quarter of a century, but he loved the Huskers so much that he quit his job and sold his home in lovely San Jose, Calif., just to move back to Nebraska one week before the 1972 season kicked off against UCLA.

That year Al and his beautiful wife, Winnie, set up headquarters in a Lincoln motel to watch Bob Devaney finish out his last season at the Husker helm. Then in the off season they decided to retreat to San Jose and live with their daughter Liz. But the Nebraska safari was so much fun the McPhersons moved back to the motel for the start of Tom Osborne's coaching career in 1973. After another winter in sunny California, the McPhersons purchased a permanent home in Lincoln and moved in just in time for the start of the 1974 season.

The McPhersons, of course, were never content just to watch Nebraska home games in Lincoln and took up the road trip circuit. They made the trip south to Baton Rouge, La., for the 1976 Husker opener with Louisiana State University. Now Al is known as Big Red Bleacher Bum No. 1 and he doesn't come by that reputation innocently. He dresses the part to the hilt and even drives a Big Red station wagon, bearing a license plate that reads "Rah Red." He drove that wagon to Baton Rouge and it was parked downtown one day as Al and Winnie, "Big Red Bleacher Bum No. 2," attended an impromptu pep rally of several red-attired Nebraska fans at one of the Louisiana state capital's refreshment parlors. To their dismay, they found that the rear license plate had been ripped off and the front plate, though still in place, had a screw loosened. Apparently the vandal or vandals had been frightened away from removing the front plate by a passing car.

The McPhersons could do nothing but return to their motel and notify the police by phone. A pair of Baton Rouge's finest soon arrived in a squad car. The officers dutifully recorded the events. Big Red Bleacher Bum No. 2 suggested that some LSU fraternity pranksters might be the culprits. But her accusation drew little sympathy from the policemen. One officer admitted to being a former LSU athlete and the other said he was also a graduate of that institution. Both officers

failed to comprehend the serious nature of the theft of a Big Red license plate and the crime was never solved.

Meanwhile, the McPhersons were forced to fill out a police department affidavit to permit them to operate their car 30 days without a second license plate. But the McPhersons, making a trip from Louisiana to Indiana for next week's Nebraska game with a caravan of Big Red fans, knew the permit wouldn't prevent them from being stopped by other curious law enforcement officers in the many states through which their car had to pass. The "Bleacher Bums" made their run from Louisiana to Indiana and then back to Nebraska in a fashion that would have made Johnny Rodgers proud. Their net loss was only a \$2 fee paid to the Nebraska State Vehicle Department in Lincoln for a replacement license plate.

The McPhersons admit that not all of their road trips have been such misadventures. On a 1980 road trip to Pennsylvania, the McPhersons were feeling sort of lonely just west of their destination for the Penn State-Nebraska battle. They were near the Penn State stadium and hadn't seen any Nebraska cars. But just as the only neighbors in sight seemed to be Pennsylvania pines, a car from the rear approached with the Nebraska plates. The incident had all the impact of the parting of the Red Sea. As the car moved into the passing lane the McPhersons heard a loud speaker from the zooming car play the Husker fight song. They later said a Memorial Stadium roar had never sounded any sweeter.

Husker Bob Rowe **The One-Man Cheering Section**

A star was born when Nebraska fan Bob Rowe decided it was his calling to lead Big Red fans in cheers — before, during and after Husker games. Known as Husker Bob, rambling Rowe has more moves than Dean Martin's Gold Diggers. In fact the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders ask him to send film of his various antics. I told him recently at the fine breakfast put on by Dick Perry and Bill Wood at the Villager that he was the best I've ever seen, and he reluctantly admitted he wasn't just another pretty face.

Husker Bob is a native of Vista, about eight miles from Tony Davis' hometown of Tecumseh. He started as a printer but now is in the trucking business.



"Husker Bob" Rowe — "Eat your heart out Burt Reynolds"

I've always loved his philosophy on age even though he refuses to divulge his number of years on earth. "Age is a matter of mind," Husker Bob likes to say. "If you don't mind, it doesn't matter." But Husker Bob takes no chances. He keeps his own health trim by taking a vitamin pill every day after he brushes his teeth. His only malady is that his throat gets sore during the exciting football season. But sore throat or not, Husker Bob is a permanent fixture in the south stands of Memorial Stadium.

Husker Bob said he became a cheerleader of the south stadium quite by accident. "I don't remember who we were playing, but there were these two fans who were talking bad about the team and I got so disgusted with them that I said I was going down to where the action was.

"I went right down between the goal posts in the south end zone and somehow my hat got tipped onto the field. So I jumped down to retrieve it. I could tell the policemen weren't going to stop me so I scooted off toward the band and the fans started to cheer as I ran across the field. The next week I came

up the ramp and everyone applauded me and asked if I was going to lead cheers again and that's how it all started." Thus, a star was born.

Husker Bob doesn't reserve his boosterism just for the playing field. He spends many Friday nights at Misty's Lounge in Lincoln, raising money for one of his favorite projects, the N.U. Band. Husker Bob helps raise the money that allows the Nebraska pep band to play out-of-state. Being a class gentleman, Bob always credits the fund-raising to another great Big Red fan, Bob Milton, the owner of Misty's.

Rowe also is an avid Nebraska basketball and baseball fan and has a special place in his heart for the nearby Kansas City Royals. He likes to identify himself with a former Royal relief pitcher Al Hrabosky, the Mad Hungarian. Like Hrabosky, who went behind the mound to meditate before pitching, Husker Bob says he has to psyche himself up before cheering. He says he psyches up by watching all those people in the stadium. In fact, one day at Royal Stadium in Kansas City, Bob made an unofficial guest appearance and had the entire left field bleacher crowd on its feet, all the way to home plate.

The great writer Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "Nothing great has ever been achieved without enthusiasm." That philosophy applies to everything in life, but in the case of Husker Bob, enthusiasm is what makes him so great. He certainly is a great enthusiast and as the organizer of the Husker Football Fan Hall of Fame, I intend to see my football buddy, Governor Charlie Thone, and tell him the state should name a road after you, Husker Bob. Maybe even a street. Or at least an alley.

John Hendrix **"Toss of the Cookies"**

One of the finest N.U. fans I know is John Hendrix, a former semi-pro baseball player deluxe, better known in athletic circles as the "Pride of Benkelman, Ne."

John should be named to this Hall of Fame for Fans because of his great loyalty and his wonderful sense of humor. A sense of humor is something every Nebraska fan has for 51 weeks out of the year but misplaces the week of the Oklahoma game.

But not John. He's the one who taught jack-o-lanterns how

to smile. His humor only disappeared one time and that was when he saw "Big John" Corker, the Oklahoma Cowboy linebacker, come on the field a few years back and concluded that, "there's a man that could go hunting bear with a switch."

John's favorite story is one about semi-pro baseball and he breaks up as he tells this incident.

A former Grand Island semi-pro baseball player was playing with a team in southern Nebraska a few years back to pick up a few extra bucks during the season.

It seems a few of the players would gather at the local tavern after each game to quench their thirst with a few jars of brew and other various colas to replay the action. One of the players, after eating a large sack of peanuts, with his suds, decided to wash off his new chompers. While the players talked, this player nonchalantly took out his upper plate and sort of rinsed it off right in his glass of beer, as his teammates sat sort of stunned and in silence.

One Grand Island player, whose stomach was stronger on the playing field than at sights such as this one, had to excuse himself and go back to the men's room and "toss his cookies."

Diane and Bobby Mettenbrink, Grand Island

A couple loyal Nebraska fans, Bobby and Diane Mettenbrink of Grand Island, (Diane, a fine real estate salesgirl from our office, is also known as the "Mary Kay Cosmetic Queen") remind me of this funny incident we shared a few years ago.

It was a hot August afternoon, the day of the 1975 Shrine Football game in Lincoln. In fact, it started out to be one of the hottest days of the summer.

I remember stopping by the football offices to say hello to some of the coaches, and we dropped in on one of our favorite fellows, Bill Myles, who since has departed for Ohio State. That is where we first had the pleasure of meeting Kenny Brown, the Cincinnati athlete who is one of my all-time favorites. As we were visiting, Keith Steward, a walk-on from Steubenville, Ohio, came in Coach Myles' office carrying his suitcase and a heavy coat. Coach Myles, who is blessed with a great sense of humor, immediately got to joking with Steward as to why the heavy coat on such a hot day. Keith never flinched once as he replied, "My mother told me to bring it since she says it gets cold out here in Nebraska." I think this typifies every mother's love for her son, no matter where he may go.

CALIFORNIANS FOR NEBRASKA

Ron Depue

One of the greatest examples of true love for the Huskers has to come from Ron Depue, a former California boy, who came to school at N.U. and stayed on to make his home here in Grand Island where he is a fine young attorney.

Ron's dad, Stan Depue, a teacher in the California school system, took his family camping at the beach in San Clemente on the Friday night before the 1971 Nebraska-Oregon season opener.

Around noon they started driving to San Diego figuring they could pick up the game by radio on the station that carries the N.U. games for the Californians for Nebraska, with "Golden Voiced" Dick Perry doing the broadcast.

As they were driving down the highway, the station started to fade. Ron, being an avid fan, even at that tender age asked his dad to turn the car around and take him back to one of the rest stops along the highway where he could still get the game, on his trusty transistor radio.

Ron still smiles as he relates what a thrill it was to hear the Huskers beat Oregon 34-7 for our opener on the way to a national championship that year.

When I asked the likeable Ron if he got lonesome after the game was over, while he waited for his folks to return, he said, "No, I just sat in the bright California sunshine and grinned because I knew this was to be our year."

In fact to this day I have yet to visit with a more informed N.U. football fan than Ron. And we both agree that it may be a long time before Nebraska wins another 13 games in one season, as we did in 1971. In fact, 1982 will be our next and last chance for some time, as next fall's Hawaiian game does not count against the normal eleven game schedule allowed by the NCAA rules. So maybe in 1982 this will be another good omen.

Steve Harley, Atkinson

Steve Harley, the Atkinson fan, has possibly one of the greatest scrap book collections in the state.

Recently I was proud to see him get a nice write-up by Tom Allen, the fine Omaha World-Herald writer. He is a very deserving young man.

He has even loaned some of his scrap books to members of

the N.U. coaching staff for recruiting purposes.

He spends up to an estimated 1,000 hours a year compiling every facet of each season's stories for his poster-sized scrap books.

One of the most unusual stories I've ever heard occurred the day of the spring game in Lincoln in 1972. Vice President Hubert Humphrey was in town and inasmuch as it was a rainy day Steve had one of his scrap books covered up with a plastic cover and was approaching Mr. Humphrey to get an autograph when several FBI agents alertly intercepted him. They felt he might have a concealed weapon under the plastic.

Steve who recently married Julie Kennedy, a Gowrie, Iowa native and an avid Iowa Hawkeye and Iowa State Cyclone fan, is looking forward to taking in the Hawaii trip next fall on sort of a belated Honeymoon.

M.G. "Mutt" Volz

A great N.U. fan is M.G. "Mutt" Volz, the Lincoln insurance baron and one of the best Big Eight officials to ever come out of this area.

His favorite humorous event happened in a Big Eight contest between Colorado and Missouri. The Buffs had a big, strong fullback who used to strike terror in the hearts of defensive linemen with his bull-like launches. On a play near the goal line, as umpire, Matt detected a Missouri defensive player slugging the C.U. fullback. Naturally, the Tiger player was asked to leave the game, but before doing so, he protested profusely saying, "Look at my arm, that big fullback bit me." Sure enough, Volz said, there were teeth marks, evidence of a bite. Unfortunately, it is the old story: the officials didn't see the biting but only the retaliation. Naturally the defensive player was the one tossed out of the game.

On another occasion when Mutt was starting out his great career by working some of the high school games in the area, he was officiating a game between Omaha Tech and Lincoln High and assessed a holding penalty against a Tech player. As the penalty was being assessed, the Tech coach yelled at the official, "You stink", and one of the officials in Mutt's crew stepped off another penalty and turned to the coach and said, "How do we smell from here?" The coach and the officials all laughed and the game proceeded.

Mr. Osborne, Senior

I have had some great coffee breaks in my day but never as wonderful as the day I stopped at Charles Osborne's business establishment in Hastings and had a nice visit with this fine gentleman, (Coach Tom Osborne's dad) and his other son, Jack, also one of the best athletes to ever grace Hastings High and College athletic uniforms.

The elder Osborne admits that Tom almost didn't get into the coaching field. He had hoped to go into administration work at some religious school and almost enrolled at the San Anselmo School in San Francisco but they wanted him to go into ministerial work. However, the executive work appealed to him the most and Tom passed up the opportunity.

Finally, when the Washington Redskins kept the heat on him to play in the NFL, he had to make a career decision, and he chose to stay with football.

Charles Osborne chuckles as he relates some tid-bits about Tom's early athletic career. When he was playing football on the Hastings Junior High team in the eighth grade Tom sat on the bench throughout his first game. He was slightly irritated as all young athletes get and he elected to ride back to Hastings with his folks instead of riding on the bus. Tom, in his own quiet way, was sort of critical of the coach and told his dad that he felt the coach was not as intelligent as he had first thought. Finally in the next game he got to play a quarter and he mentioned to his folks at the supper table that evening that he felt the coach had picked up a few smarts. In his third game, little Tom played about half the contest and he was quick to summarize that the coach was really getting his football knowledge together. Finally, he started the fourth game and from there on out, it was obvious to the Hastings redhead that the coach had finally got his act together.

Another chuckle came out when Charles Osborne told about his wife not being an avid football fan in the early days. This struck home as my wife always felt the same way and regarded football as just a necessary evil like paying taxes and getting the dog a new license. But Osborne smiles as he tells that in his early courtship days, his future wife only saw one football game. During the early days of their marriage she didn't care to see much football. And he relates a family joke that, in spite of her lack of football knowledge, she often gave motherly advice about what plays her sons, both quarterbacks, should have

called on the gridiron the previous week.

That day, when Mr. Osborne and I were walking back to his front office from the coffee room, it sort of gave me goose pimples when he offered a most beautiful remark, "You know, Wink, I sometimes feel like the luckiest man in the world to have raised two wonderful sons, both with lovely wives and families. It sort of makes me feel blessed by the good Lord." My opinion is that the world is a better place because of people like the Osbornes. I am truly blessed to be able to call this wonderful family my friends.

COACH GEORGE "CRUMP" REDDING

One of the funniest stories I've heard in the prep coaching ranks comes from George "Crump" Redding, the former North Platte mentor, and a man recognized as one of the finest high school coaches to ever come out of the Kansas and Nebraska prep ranks. Dean Olson, the North Platte super-fan, says he is the finest coach he ever saw, in his days of being quite an authority on Bulldog athletic fortunes. He is the father of Dave Redding, the former N.U. defensive end who is now a member of the University of Missouri staff.

During a very important prep game at Scottsbluff, a fast moving fall rain which was turning to snow, moved into the area rather unexpectedly and "Crump" wasn't dressed for this sort of a day as the weather report he had received that morning was for clearing skies. Even though he was getting wetter by the minute on the sidelines, George felt he could hold out until halftime to get on some proper clothing.

However, the fiery Redding saw his favored Platters put on what he felt was a dismal first half show, though they were favored. He took his team to the dressing room for a well deserved tongue lashing as they hadn't played near their potential.

As he entered the dressing room Coach Redding, feeling like a drowned rat, took off his wet socks and in sort of a frenzy he threw them over the furnace in the locker room. Then the determined coach told his squad in no uncertain terms that they were making too many errors and quickly pointed them out.

Finally, Pete Tatman, one of the great prep and Nebraska fullbacks, sort of raised his hand and said, "Coach." The frenzied coach screamed, "Shut up, Pete — I'll get to you later."

Finally another player asked, "Coach, can I have a word with you?" only to be abruptly shot off by the fired up Redding one more time.

Once more the determined Tatman asked, "Coach — don't you know . . . ?" This time the angry coach had reached his wits' end and screamed, "Sit down and shut up, Pete! I'm telling you — I'll have plenty to say to you later, as you haven't played anywhere up to your potential either." Finally Tatman, who was about as tough a guy as anyone would ever run into, almost sobbed, "Coach, I'm not trying to talk to you — but I'm trying to tell you that your socks are on fire."

As Coach Redding dashed across the room to douse the smoke out of his socks, the players burst into uncontrollable laughter, the whole situation eased and the Platters went out to win this important game from the always tough Scottsbluff Bearcats.

The likeable Redding, now an insurance adjustor in Aurora, concedes this was about as close to getting a hot foot as he has ever been.

Conoco Cafe Coffee Club — Grand Island

A fun group that meets every day in Grand Island is known as the "Conoco Cafe Coffee Club Gang." They are a fine group of chaps from various professions who love to discuss the pertinent problems of the day and often make decisions that President Reagan would be hard pressed to decide. However, many of their most important decisions are made in regard to the Husker athletic fortunes.

A few weeks back the group was discussing what their various definitions of having a lot of money would be.

John Bowers, the Third City refrigeration expert, who is an unofficial "Speaker of the House" for this fine bunch of fellows, quizzed various members of the group as to what his opinion would be.

Bill Miller, the bakery tycoon, felt it would be having a half million dollars more than you need.

Darrel Enck, the publishing mogul, remarked, "It would be having twice your present net worth."

His son, "Tremendous Terry," said, "It is all relative — for even a poor wino, having two bottles of wine, instead of one, is like heaven to him."

Chet "The Jet" Felske, the electric motor magnate, shook

the group out of its complacency when he remarked, "My idea of being wealthy would just being able to pay off your bookie and your gambling debts after the annual Nebraska-Oklahoma football game."

A few days later, after recovering from Felske's "bell-ringer" they got to talking about the arts.

Jack Boren, a chap who understands the finer things in life, remarked that he read where Dolly Parton, the famous western singer, was going to appear in several movies. And Jack even mentioned the fact she might appear in the famous Shakespearean play, "Romeo and Juliet."

Dr. Ben Somer brought down the house when he quipped, "I have no doubt in my mind that she can play the part, but I question whether she would be able to lean over a balcony."

Mike Fitzpatrick — Papillion

Mike Fitzpatrick, former prep coach at Central Catholic in Grand Island, was often referred to as one of the handsomest football coaches in prep circles and I think we can go a little further than that and call him one of the best. Mike modestly admitted the fans only said that because it was the truth.

When I asked him what he'll always remember about Nebraska football he replied, "Of all the fine young men I have ever met in the program — and I see many of the players after they get out of the program because they either lose their rings or need new ones — I think the finest memory I have is about Van Brownson. When I was at Central Catholic, we always brought the Husker seniors out to play basketball against a local team, for the March of Dimes.

"Most of the players kept working toward the locker room door after the game, signing autographs for the kids. Van stayed upstairs and made sure everyone was taken care of. When he finally got downstairs, some man came down and said that a little crippled boy had not received an autograph. Van put his jersey back on and rushed up and stayed with that family for more than 15 minutes. I've never forgotten that, Charlie".

I'm glad to know that Van is going to be doing the "Sideline Interviews" this fall with Tim Moreland for KFOR. He's replacing Adrian Fiala, who is going to be in the booth with the exciting Moreland.

I sort of have compassion for poor old Tim since appearing

before and after the game with both the handsome Adrian and Van would be about like poor old Howard Cosell standing between the legendary Don Meredith and Frank Gifford.

Robert Arterburn, Blair

Another of the fine fans that follow the Big Red every week is Robert Arterburn of Blair, an auditor with the Nebraska Real Estate Commission.

"Rapid Robert," as he was known in his baseball days when he was reputed to be one of the smoothest fielding first basemen in northeast Nebraska, was in the stands during Willie Greenlaw's great interception and 95-yard return for a TD against Colorado in 1955.

He still chuckles as we review the story about the run that the brilliant Greenlaw made earlier in the day. However, LeRoy Butherus, a fine Nebraska end, clipped on the play. Willie was almost to pay dirt when the hustling Butherus was trying desperately to help, but the way it turned out it wasn't necessary. Willie's run was called back and went for naught.

The next Monday Greenlaw jokingly told Butherus that in next week's game he was going to get a whistle, like the referee, which he was going to toot when he needed a block.

The knowledgeable Arterburn agrees with me that it is a shame Willie couldn't have been an I-Back in our present regime as with his great running and his deft southpaw passing, he would have driven the other Big-Eight defensive coaches to their early graves.

Dark Victory for the Lutrells

Don and Carolyn Lutrell, the Grand Island die-hard Husker boosters, are a pair of the finest fans I know.

One true story that I will never forget involved this couple when Nebraska played Minnesota on a national televised game from the Twin Cities, in 1964.

Carolyn was watching the game on TV only to have her beloved Huskers fall behind 21-12 with less than eight minutes to play. Poor Carolyn couldn't stand to see them get beat with the whole nation watching the tube. She decided there was no reason to "watch the bridges that were burning." So she shut the game off.

When her handsome husband, Don, came home from work

that evening he was very enthused as he walked into the kitchen to get a cup of coffee, but in an instant he could see his wife was literally in mourning. Finally after pouring his coffee, he asked, "What did you think of the game?" She almost sobbed, "Well, what should I think of it? It was horrible. I am just sick."

Don, seeing a chance to string his wife along, really put on an act by saying maybe the other Nebraska victories were flukes. After seeing his delightful little wife close to tears, he comforted her that the Huskers pulled a story-book finish with Fred Duda hitting Frankie Solich and Kent McCloughan with late strikes to beat the Gophers 26-21.

To this day we still kid her that the game is never over until the final gun sounds.

Jim Colburn, Valentine

One of our finest Big Red fans has to be "Jumpin Jim" Colburn of Valentine. Jim is a dedicated fan who played the game himself and had the pleasure of playing on one of the finest high school teams when he was a senior in 1945. His team scored 297 points to the opponents' 0, which is about as creditable as you can get. "Jumpin Jim" played left tackle on this formidable crew and perhaps this had something to do with shutting out the opponents for the full season.

Jim remembers only too well one of the most talked about games ever played in central Nebraska prep circles, when Valentine played Broken Bow, led by the immortal Kent McCloughan. Jim Murphy was the star of the Valentine eleven. Broken Bow was rated No. 3 in the state and leading 21-18 with just two seconds to play with the ball on the Valentine nine-yard line. Instead of falling on the ball and being content with the three-point win, Broken Bow elected to try to score again. They threw a pass into the end zone and Valentine's Jim Murphy, a crack 440 man on the cinders, picked it off two yards deep in the end zone and ran 102 yards for a Valentine touchdown to win the game, 24-21. The brilliant McCloughan, one of the fastest men I've ever seen in prep circles, tried in vain to catch him, but Murphy, who later played on the N.U. frosh team, wasn't known to let any grass grow under his feet.

Pete Kyros — Grand Island

As this book went to press, my heart was saddened by the death of Pete Kyros, the fine Cornhusker fan from Grand

Island. He was the father of former N.U. safety, George Kyros, from the 1972-'74 seasons. I was very proud to call Pete one of my best friends.

Pete's untimely passing at the age of only 49 was a loss felt throughout the Third City. Everyone knew him as one who lived life every day to its fullest and who always had something happy to say to everyone.

One of Pete's favorite stories concerned an event that happened during the 1965 Missouri game in Columbia. Every year the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce group, known as the Presidents Club, take an out-of-state trip and celebrate a year's hard work to secure new memberships. This particular year, the trek was to a hard-fought game in the "Show-Me-State."

In the game the Tiger quarterback Gary Lane scored two quick touchdowns in the first quarter to give the Tigers a fast 14-0 lead and it looked like an impending Missouri rout.

As I looked around at our beleaguered crew of such fans as Dale Parsons, Mike Wilson, the late Art Richardson, George Boosalis, Lou "The Crew" McKenzie and others, I could see they were having an extra "jar" of gatorade or something to restore their courage. Being a teetotler, I sat in absolute shock.



George Kyros — "If I was to have another son, this is what I'd want him to be like."

The loveable Kyros always recalled what happened next this way — “A deadly hush fell over the Nebraska fans, huddled in the Don Faurot Field, as they looked at the scoreboard which reflected a Missouri 14 — Nebraska 0 score. I turned around to sort of survey the shocked Nebraska group when I saw a dejected Charlie Winkler standing in the top row of the high Missouri stadium sadly looking over the side. Instantly, I yelled, ‘Charlie — don’t jump!’” Pete never knew how close I came to doing this, but somehow along the line I knew my beloved Huskers would come back.

Of course, the day marked one of the great comebacks in history as Larry Wachholtz kicked the field goal in the dying minutes to give the Huskers a 16-14 come-from-behind victory.

My life was a lot brighter having known Pete and his beautiful family. His lovely wife, Betty, and daughter and son, Jamie and George, are some of my all-time favorite people. In fact George is a young man I often mention in my banquet speeches because of the fact he stands for what I believe in so much in athletics. Work and dedication make such a difference. I don’t really believe George ever weighed more than 155 pounds soaking wet, but he played like a young man with a 250-pound heart. He had a big motor and it purred “Big Red” all the way.

Dr. Robert Burton, Lincoln

Another great N.U. booster is Dr. Robert Burton, the former star basketball player from Falls City.

Now a prominent Lincoln dentist, Robert and his wife serve as “foster parents” to one of the top Nebraska gridgers, one of my all-time favorite players, Roger Craig. I have had the pleasure of sitting by Dr. Burton and every time Roger carries the ball for a good gain, he always says, “There goes Sweetness.” I can’t think of a better name for Roger, but I’ll tell you, opposing linemen sure don’t call him that.

I think the nicest thing ever said to me was when I sat by Dr. Burton when we beat Oklahoma in 1978 in that 17-14 thriller and he shook my hand after the game and said, “And to think I got to see this game with Charlie Winkler.” I felt the same way about seeing the game with him, because he is one of the most knowledgeable fans I know.

The Marvin Sinners, Harvard

Without a doubt, a couple of the greatest Husker fans are Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Sinner of Harvard.

This beautiful couple never misses an event, whether it is football, basketball, track, a Husker scrimmage or about any sport on campus.

Recently I received a letter from Mr. Sinner, who wondered how much it would cost to construct a dome over Memorial Stadium. He feels we could build one similar to the one near Detroit to allow our fans to be out of the sun and the cold, or any other inclement weather condition. The Sinners are a little different from many fans who suggest something and then say, "Let George do it!" Mr. Sinner has offered to contribute \$1,000 to get this drive moving, a token of their sincerity.

Mr. and Mrs. Sinner tell one of the most interesting stories about following the Huskers that I have ever heard. When they were in Los Angeles in 1972 for the U.C.L.A. game, they took a tour of Knotts Berry Farm on an old-fashioned passenger train. This was during the time that the terrorist group had broken into the Olympic Village in Germany and killed several athletes, an event which had everyone a bit tense.

Since the train was carrying many tourists, officials wanted to add some excitement so they had some actors dress up like robbers. They came in a door with their guns raised as for a hold-up. Unseen by the Sinners, the conductor who was standing behind them reached for a fake gun and fired several shots. Needless to say, the unsuspecting Harvard couple was caught completely off-guard, and with this sudden burst of gun-fire Marvin admits he almost went through the ceiling as he screamed, "The terrorists are coming!"

He reluctantly admits that his imagination got away from him and he even thought he felt blood running down his arm. The train trip lasted another 30 minutes and Mrs. Sinner didn't see much of the scenery as she couldn't quit laughing. Marvin admits he is certainly glad he lives in the days of the beloved Big Red instead of the Jesse James desperadoes.

When they talk about hospitality, this wonderful couple can write the book. After I had the pleasure of speaking at the Harvard High School athletic banquet, two years ago they invited me over to their lovely home for coffee and pie. If there

was some way of picking the top 10 fans in the state, this outstanding couple would certainly be at the top of the list.

Nebraska Soil to Cotton Bowl

Col. Richard J. Forman, a devoted member of the Nebraska Touchdown Club from Bellevue, tells the cute story about how his wife decided to bring the beloved Huskers luck in the 1980 Cotton Bowl game in Dallas. The Formans decided they had to smuggle a little good old Nebraska soil in and put it on the turf sometime before the kickoff against Houston.

Mrs. Forman brought a huge paper cup full of Nebraska dirt and, as the crowd was starting to fill the Cotton Bowl, the couple tried to figure out a way to get the precious Nebraska soil out on the field. Finally Dick's wisdom prevailed. Just as the Nebraska marching band started out on the field, he jumped out of the lower seats of the stadium and ran out between a couple of band members. As they marched to the beat of the music, he carefully deposited the contents of his paper cup on the turf, and calmly walked back to the sidelines and regained his seat.

As we all know, this sprinkling of Nebraska soil didn't exactly bring the Huskers luck since they were defeated by Houston in the dying seconds 17-14, but I'll wager it gave the popular band director, Robert A. Fought, a surprise when he saw Dick marching out on the field with his band. The likeable Bellevue booster never did tell me whether he was completely in step during his abbreviated musical career.

Gary "Gunner" Frandsen, Dallas

One of the all-time great Husker fans is Gary Frandsen, better known in Nebraska athletic circles as "Gunner".

I have never known a fellow as versatile as the former York "man-of-all-seasons." Blessed with unlimited talent, he has been an attorney, sports writer, baseball front office executive and loan magnate. The only guy that I feel compares with him in being so multi-talented is Dr. Robert Prokop, the Wilber "Mr. Everything" and a member of the Nebraska Board of Regents.

"Gunner" was formerly known as the most eligible bachelor of the Texas "jet set," but recently lost this title when he married a beautiful airline stewardess. No longer is he the "Burt Reynolds of the Big D."

Gary is known as a No. 1 fun guy. A couple of years ago when I was speaking to a group in York, I pulled a little joke on this popular chap, one that brought down the house. I read a fake telegram, which was supposedly from Gunner. I had a piece of paper that looked just like the real thing and pulled it from a wire service envelope. It went like this:

Wink, I am very sorry I can't attend the banquet in York tonight, as I am receiving a very prestigious award from the Texas Fellowship of Athletes Chapter. Thank you for your invitation, however.

Sincerely yours,
Your friend,
Gary G. Frandsen

P.S. So you won't have a heart attack from shock, Wink, I have been named to their All-Opponent Team.

Dr. G.H. Leonard, Grand Island

One of the most interesting stories told by a great N.U. fan happened to Dr. G.H. Leonard, the Third City chiropractor. Dr. Leonard tells it like yesterday, but it had to be back in the late 1930's when as a young man he was trying to hitch a ride from North Platte to Denver. He was hanging around a truck stop in North Platte hoping to line up a ride with some willing driver when he learned a trucker was leaving in just a few minutes for the Mile High City. After visiting with the truck driver, Leonard was told he could get a lift.

As the trucker was pulling through Colorado, he told Leonard that he had to make one stop in the town ahead as he wanted to try to help recruit a young football player for Notre Dame if possible. The trucker actually was a part-time football scout and did some ivory hunting for the Fighting Irish.

As they pulled into an all-night restaurant, the driver took Leonard in for a cup of coffee and promptly asked the waitress if she knew a young chap by the name of Vike Francis. She replied that she did and as a matter of fact, if he wanted to talk to him, he was over in the corner playing the pin-ball machine.

The Notre Dame scout went over and introduced himself and told the All-American prepster, who had played that past year at Fort Morgan, Colo., that he would like to visit with him in regard to enrolling at the South Bend campus to play his college football. The immortal Vike was quick to straighten out the would-be recruiter as he thanked him for his interest and his time, but said he fully intended on following his brother's

career at Nebraska. Of course, his brother was quite an act to follow, the All-American, Sam Francis.

Dr. Leonard later became a great friend of the talented professional football star, Stan Heath, when he lived in Alliance, where the former Cleveland Brown fullback was a prominent rancher.

Stansbury and Swift

My conscience sometimes hurts when I tell this story from the podium on two of my best friends, chaps who don't have to take a back seat for their loyalty, Dick Stansbury, the former N.U. track star, and Lou Swift, know affectionately by his friends as "Swift Louie" for his feats on the undefeated 1950 Lincoln Northeast team.

These two fellows have been on the "liquor detail" for years, at the home Husker games and I always have fun with them if they are in the audience when I am speaking at some athletic event. I mention the fact that they have asked Captain Gail Gade, head of the campus police and former N.U. gridder, to be taken off this assignment since their idea of police brutality is taking a fifth away from a wino.

No Thanksgiving Dinner

One of the finest Big Red fans I know is Twyla Holstein of Omaha, the daughter of the late Bill Thompson, one of the most capable school administrators the Grand Island school system ever had. She is one of the few female fans that would drive all the way from Omaha to Memorial Stadium just to see a Husker scrimmage. Twyla feels that Nebraska's success in football is due to the wonderful co-operation among the coaching staff. Working together as a unit is extremely important, she thinks.

Mrs. Holstein tells a story that happened to her the last time the Huskers played Oklahoma on Thanksgiving day, in 1972. The Holsteins had some friends who were moving to Washington, D.C., so she decided she would have them over for Thanksgiving dinner. As she was hurrying around to get the dinner ready ahead of the kickoff, it seemed everything went wrong. The last straw was when the roaster bag she had the turkey in burst, releasing all the juices all over the oven, which started a fire. After putting out the fire, she did what any good

Big Red fan would do — shut off the oven and sat down and watched the game. To this day I still wonder if the group went out to McDonald's for dinner.

The sad part of this story is that this lovely lady is moving with her family to Montana to retire beside the Yellowstone River. I asked her only one favor: Be looking for any future Big Red gridders in that area.

Dr. and Mrs. Harold Nordland, York

Some of the most loyal and dedicated Husker fans in the state are Dr. and Mrs. Harold Nordland of York. One of the funnier true stories ever told involved them a few years back in Colorado before the Huskers took on the Golden Buffaloes.

Harold and his wife were out looking at some riding horses along a back mountain road when they discovered a deer's head lying in the ditch. Someone had apparently hit a deer and thought they would salvage the meat but left the head behind. Mrs. Nordland, a jokster in her own right, had her husband stop so they could examine the head. In the back of her mind she thought of a joke she'd like to play. Throwing the head in the back of their station wagon and carefully covering it up, they went back to the motel where they and most of their friends were staying. She then got the key to the room of old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Dick Huber, since she knew this was her chance to repay some of the pranks that they had played on her down through the years. After carefully wrapping the evidence in a blanket, she and Harold smuggled the head into the Hubers' room. They carefully propped it up at the head of the bed and covered it with the bedspread.

After some good-natured pre-game celebrating, Dick and Patty Huber went back to their room to relax before going out for an evening in Denver. When Dick noticed something in his bed, he felt someone must have accidentally got in his room and gone to sleep there. Throwing back the bedspread and seeing two large eyes looking at him in a dimly lighted room almost put Huber in orbit. He admits he did a toe dance for several minutes while his lovely wife almost fainted.

Dick, in his fright, almost broke the world's record for the hammer throw, except the object he tossed half-way across the large parking lot was a deer's head. They tell me the motel officials are still in the dark about where the head came from.

Reliable sources claim that Dick Huber will never again listen to that song made famous by Nebraska's popular band leader, Bobby Mills, "Beautiful Brown Eyes."

H.S. Strand, Polk

One of the most dedicated Nebraska fans was the late H.S. Strand of Polk who rarely missed a game at home or away. One of the true stories, that has to be a classic, occurred in our ill-fated freshmen game with Kansas at Lawrence in the famous wet field incident of 1976 when our frosh suffered a 19-18 defeat.

All the Nebraska fans who attended this game on the Friday before the varsity game were stunned when Jayhawk officials moved the game out of KU's Memorial Stadium and onto a soggy slanted practice field that wasn't fit for any type of athletic contest.

There were no down-markers, no goal line markings or anything even similar to a Nebraska junior high school field. The game was about 10 minutes along when Mr. Strand arrived after desperately trying to unravel the well-kept secret of where the game was going to be played. He came over to me and put his arm around my shoulder and asked, "Wink, did we win or lose the toss?" I told him that we had won the flip of the coin. Then he asked the funniest thing I've ever had asked at a football game. "Well, what did we do when we won the toss — did we take the wind or the downhill?"

Grand Island's Die-hard Dentist

Numbered among our best Big Red fans are Dr. Ben Somer, Grand Island dentist, and his lovely wife, Phyllis.

Ben is a stickler for getting to the stadium early. He likes to buy his program and be situated in his seat at the opening kickoff.

At one of the home games in 1972, the Somers arrived at their seat a little late and were unable to purchase a program. They made a vow this was never going to happen again.

The next week they got stuck in traffic and arrived at the stadium just a few minutes before game time and Phyllis told Ben to jump out of the car and grab a program and she would go and park the car and meet him at their seats as fast as she could.

So "Big Ben" as he was known in his athletic days, took his wife up on the offer and bought a program, some hotdogs and coffee and was sitting down when Phyllis arrived just in time for the toss of the coin.

About that time an announcement came over the Memorial Stadium loudspeaker that some Husker fan had left his motor running, with the car locked. Then they gave the license number. But the Somer family was so happy about getting settled down in their seats for the pre-game festivities they paid no attention to the license number being read over the loudspeaker.

During the game the announcer made a couple more pleas for some fan to come and unlock his or her car and shut the motor off. Of course the Somers paid no attention, but many of their friends recognized the license number being given as belonging to Ben and Phyllis.

After a sparkling Husker victory, the Somers returned to their car, feeling as though they were walking on air when they made the startling discovery that it was their car that was left running. Ben admits that he and his wife made the fastest exit in history out of the parking lot, as they were so embarrassed. He did mention he at least didn't have to warm up the motor before take-off.

Dr. Henry Ceck "A cancelled Check?"

Dr. Henry Ceck, the former N.U. cager and now a leading orthodontist in Lincoln, is one of the most colorful and humorous men I know.

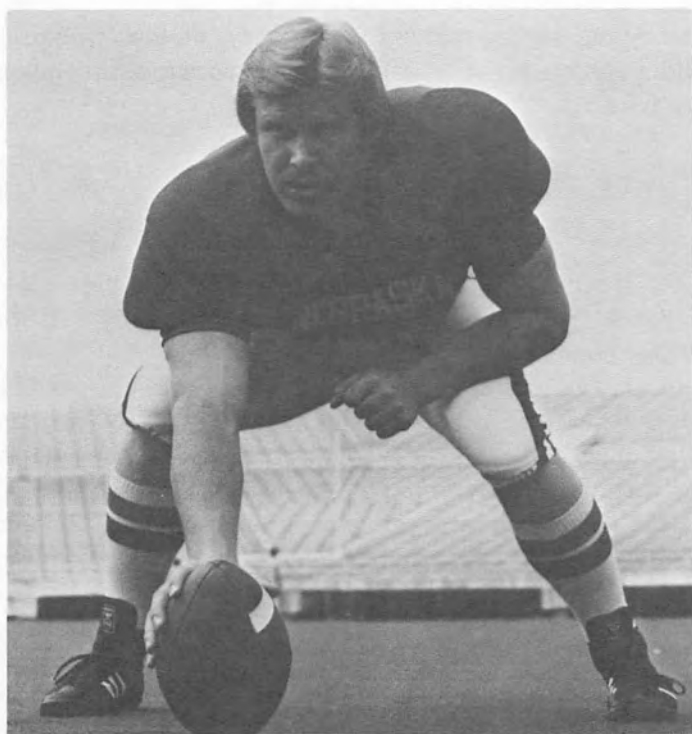
In his first day of practice under former N.U. coach Harry Good, one of the assistant coaches handed a ball to every player on the squad and said, "Men, I want you to practice shooting from the spots where you might expect to be in the game."

"Happy Henry", as he was known to his teammates, immediately sat down on the bench and started arching the ball toward the basket. He told the stunned coach, "This is where I expect to be."

The "good doctor" is one of two men who I start smiling at when I look at them. The other one is Rodney Dangerfield. Pretty good company — eh, Henry??



Dr. Henry Ceck — a natural comic.



Kelly Saalfeld

Chapter 24

Husker Humor

The road to Husker football glory was never meant to be a six-lane freeway. It was paved from blood, sweat, tears — 90 percent perspiration and 10 percent inspiration — and all those other cliches that come from nearly a century of football. Traveling the Husker glory road has been far from dull; just getting there has been half the fun. Along the way to those Husker glory years, there have been moments just as precious as any unforgettable Big Red football win. I've put together a collection of these gems, true stories that have molded Nebraska's winning football tradition.

The Pre-game Pep Talk

Joe Partington, the former Nebraska center and later an FBI agent, tells one of my favorite stories about speeches several players gave before the Notre Dame game of 1947.

Tom Novak spoke first because there was little that Trainwreck ever did or said that didn't stir his teammates. Then Cletus Fischer, now a coach with the Huskers, took the floor in the Husker locker room and delivered a fiery tirade, before ending his dramatic talk by taking his helmet and throwing it against the wall. There followed a long period of dramatic silence.

Finally, Nebraska ace punter and end Jack Pesek turned to Partington and asked him, "Joe, do you really feel we can beat these guys?"

Joe, being an honest guy, broke up the players around him when he quickly replied, "Heck, no, we can't beat them."

The Game Dedication

Partington, who is one of the most colorful men I know, also tells the story about Jack "Mad Dog" Hazen, the end from Omaha North, who was trying to work his teammates to a fevered pitch during the lackluster years of the 1940's. It was a dreadful year, though and the team had dedicated games to the coach, the governor, the chancellor, the warden and was finally running out of people to dedicate games to.

But “Mag Dog”, who gained this name from this stirring saying, “We’re going to fight like Mad Dogs”, was in the middle of one of his pulse-pounding speeches when it came time for the game dedication and Hazen stuttered for only a second or two before he screamed, “Let’s win this one for Ad Lewandowski! (Lew was the ticket manager, former coach, business manager and a man that served in every capacity except water boy).

Partington wipes away a tear laughing and admits the team didn’t win that game either but he says the players’ intentions were good.

Downfield Blocker

During the late 1970’s, one of my favorite running plays to watch was guard Greg Jorgensen of Minden pulling out from his position to lead the downfield blocking for speedy I-back Rick Berns.

The running-blocking tandem wasn’t easily developed into poetry on the field, however. In his sophomore year, the



Greg Jorgensen

brilliant Berns had to learn to wait on his blockers.

One day, the mercury-hoofed Berns could wait no longer for "Jorgie" to pull out in front and finally sped by his would-be blocker. Greg admits he was never a sprinter but couldn't resist talking to Berns on their way back to the huddle. As he put his arm around Bern's shoulder he suggested, "Rick, let's make a deal, if you are going to keep running in front of me, why don't you let me carry the ball and you block?"

Tough Table Manners

One of my favorite Nebraska football players had to be Tony Davis, the "Tecumseh Tornado." Also "Tough Tony" was always good for a story or two.

One of my special stories involving Tony happened when Doug Looney, the sports writer from *Sports Illustrated* was interviewing me for his magazine article. Doug and I had made reservations for dinner at Misty's Lounge in Lincoln one Thursday night in 1975. But when we arrived at the door, there were five or six couples in line ahead of us. We were 15 minutes early for our reservation and Misty's is a popular place to eat so we didn't think too much about the delay.

But all at once, Tony Davis, our battering fullback, spotted us from his table and came out to greet us, insisting that we join him at his table. We told Tony we appreciated his kind offer but it wouldn't be right to crowd ahead of the other people. Tony continued to insist, so we apologized to the couples waiting ahead of us and assured them we would be back to take our place in line but we were only going in to say hello to Tony's lovely wife and his friend Rich Panneton of Walnut, Calif., who was a tight end on the Husker squad. After some small talk Doug and I rose to get back in line but "Tough Tony" made no bones about it. He wanted us to sit down and join them. Finally after getting involved in some good juicy conversation on the upcoming football game with Missouri, Tony still insisted we remain at their table. I felt slightly uncomfortable and I broke the likeable Doug Looney up when I rose from the table to go back to the folks who were standing in line ahead of us. To those who were still waiting I simply said, "I'm terribly sorry it happened this way — but let me tell you something — when Tony Davis tells me to sit down, by golly, I start looking for a chair."

The Davis Family

It was a sad day a couple years ago, when Hal Davis, Tony's dad, passed away. He was proud of his son Tony and nobody ever enjoyed a son anymore than Hal did.

I had so much fun with Hal and his wife, Edna, on the various Husker trips. Mrs. Davis is one of the most knowledgeable female Big Red fans I've ever met.

She and I still chuckle about her visit to Grand Island to do some shopping. She was trying to cash a check at a Third City store but for some reason she lacked the proper identification. Finally, she asked the polite clerk waiting on her to call me at our real estate office for a reference.

The obliging clerk immediately phoned me for a voucher. I assured the woman to go ahead and cash the check and told her that the customer she was waiting on was the mother of "Tough Tony" Davis.

"Don't make Tony mad," I kidded the clerk. "Tony's the one guy I know who could come to town and buy your store and tear down the building and turn it into a parking lot."

Needless to say Edna had her check cashed and then received an extra bit of good old Central Nebraska hospitality.



Tony Davis

Kelly Saalfeld and the Center Eligible Play

One of the finest centers to play for Nebraska was Kelly Saalfeld of Columbus. This determined athlete showed his ability on national television during the 1979 game with Penn State. A Nebraska pass was tipped at the line of scrimmage and Saalfeld caught the loose football in mid-air and fell forward for a one-yard gain.

On the next play from scrimmage, Kelly failed to pull off his usual good block, something the offensive line coaches picked out right away in the game films. A coach chided him for it, but Kelly got the last laugh when he responded, "Coach, that 'long' run took so much out of me that I didn't have the energy left to get a good block on my man."

Jamie Williams — Tight End

A funny, true story comes to mind involving Jamie Williams, the highly recruited Husker tight end from Davenport, Iowa.

Before this young man hangs up his togs with the Huskers, I'm predicting an All-Big Eight season and possibly an All-American year, since he has all the tools.

In the 54-0 N.U. romp over Kansas at Lawrence last fall, after Tom Osborne had swept his bench, on one of the fellows in the game for the Huskers was Jamie Williams, our sophomore tight end.

On the Jayhawk squad were a couple twin brothers from Topeka, Kan., that the Huskers had visited some about coming to Nebraska, the Alexander twins, Carky and Marky.

During the fray and probably due to the fact the Huskers had everything going right, one of these twins came up to Jamie after a play, shook his finger in his face and remarked, "You just wait — before I graduate we're going to beat you guys yet."

"Big Jamie", all 6 feet 5 inches of him, loomed over the Kansan and shook his finger knowingly in the twin's face and replied, "Well if that's the case — you better transfer to a different school then."

"Dollar Bill" Bryant

My good friend Bill Bryant, the Boys Town grad, earned his reputation of "Dollar Bill" by carrying a dollar in his pocket

always, so he wouldn't ever feel he was completely broke. Bill had his great moments at Nebraska, particularly in the Indiana game his junior year.

But "Dollar Bill" will always be remembered for receiving Nebraska's most unusual football injury. Bill was simply standing on the sidelines when Nebraska quarterback Randy Garcia uncorked one of his bullet throws. The pass streaked out of bounds and struck Bill near where he pocketed his dollar. Poor Bill had to be carried off the field in tremendous pain, sharpened for weeks by the intense kidding he took from his teammates.

Bryant is another one of those Nebraska athletes who made it with dedication, loyalty and hard work, not with fancy times in the 40-yard dash. In the business world he'll be a success and I still maintain he would be an excellent coach.

Dr. Robert J. Prokop, Wilber N.U. Board of Regents

A very colorful fellow is Bob Prokop, the former Wilber whiz in all sports and presently a member of the Nebraska Board of Regents.

A fine cager under the late Jerry Bush, and a standout semi-pro baseball player, he's a fellow I really enjoy ribbing on the banquet circuit.

Bush used to tell the story about the day that the janitor took the rim off the backboard to make some repairs on it, and "Porky" and his teammates shot for 20 minutes before they even knew it was gone.

Glen Abbott, Equipment Manager

One would have to look a long ways to find a more personable and dedicated guy than Glen Abbott, who goes out of his way to be nice to everyone.

Glen is sort of known for his dry sense of humor, and I remember visiting with him after Roger Craig's great run against Colorado last fall which was one of the most electrifying runs in years.

As I was discussing the run with Roger, who is definitely one of my all time favorite young men, the coy Abbott came up to us and slyly remarked, "I couldn't believe that run. Why Roger couldn't make that run again even on instant replay."

Warren Alfson — Wisner
All-American Guard

Warren Alfson, the former All-American guard on the Rose Bowl crew, says his favorite funny story was about the time the Huskers were playing Minnesota in the 1940 season, which turned out to be the only game they lost until they got to the Rose Bowl.

About the middle of the third quarter Warren glanced at tackle Royal Kahler who looked pale. Of course, he knew "King Kong" pretty well and he certainly knew his ashen look wasn't from fear, as Kahler wouldn't back down from a firing squad.

Finally Alfson asked, "Kong — what's the matter? You look as white as a sheet. Are you sick?"

The former Grand Island strong man sadly answered, "No — darn it, I just swallowed my cud of tobacco."

Forrest Behm — Lincoln
All-American Tackle

In the fall of 1980 when Forrest Behm, a former Husker All-American tackle and a standout on the 1940 Rose Bowl team, came back home to Lincoln for his induction into the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame, he told me this story:

When Forrest started out as a freshmen at N.U. in the late 1930's he didn't go out for football at first but he was talked into it by his former Lincoln teammates. When he finally did go out for the team, he was informed by Floyd Bottoff, the equipment manager, that they could barely find a pair of football togs and shoulders pads large enough for him, but to find a pair of 15 sized shoes would be impossible.

After a complete search of the equipment room, the coaches finally conceded it would be impossible for Behm to go out for football because no shoes were available in that size.

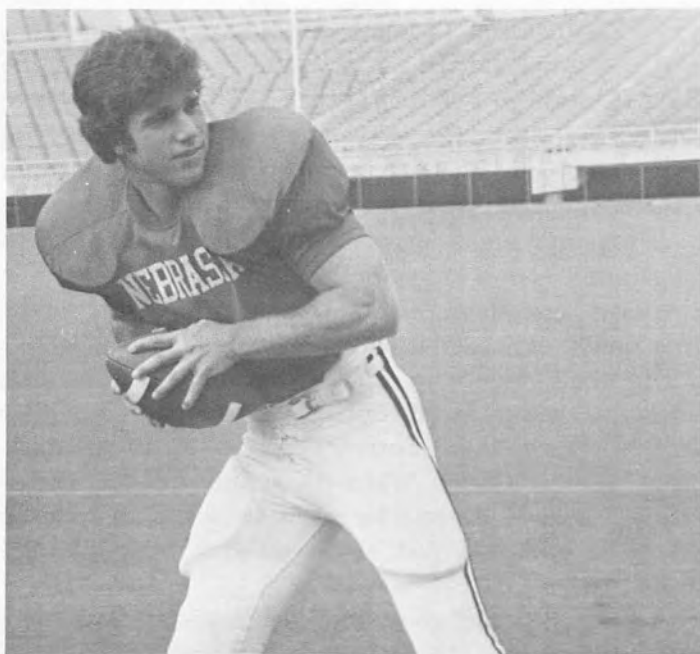
Finally, Behm asked Bottoff if he could buy his own shoes. It was agreed that Forrest could go out for football if he purchased his own cleats. When it was apparent that there were no size 15 cleats they had to settle for a pair of tennis shoes which Behm admitted just about set him back his total life savings.

The next season when the coaching staff saw the great potential this future All-American had, they put in a special order for a pair of size 15 cleats.

To prove their judgment sound, Forrest Behm became one of the all-time great tackles at Nebraska and was a standout on the famous Rose Bowl crew.



Coach George Darlington — a good recruiter



1981 Co-Captain Mark Mauer

Chapter 25

Staff

Cletus Fischer, Kicking Coach

Coach Cletus Fischer is recognized as one of the finest kicking coaches in college circles. However, he does admit the player must have at least a limited amount of talent.

Legend has it that in one of Clete's prep coaching jobs he wasn't so lucky.

The team only had one kicker and he got hurt in the second half of an important game. Clete thought he would give the school's superintendent's kid a chance to see what he could do, since the lad hadn't gotten into a game yet that year.

Finally, the ball was snapped and the youngster kicked it straight up in the air, not over 10 feet. The timid punter broke the all-time record for being a jokester when he called for a fair catch of his own meager boot. Of course, the other team snowed him with an avalanche of rushes. Poor old Clete poured onto the field against the better judgment of the assistants who tried in vain to restrain the normally cool coach.

He screamed at the official, "Man, don't you know a foul when you see one? Heck, that's roughing the kicker if I've ever seen it."

The official just shook his head and walked away, as Clete pleaded, "Why wouldn't it be?"

The man in the striped shirt sadly replied, "That guy ain't no kicker!"

Paul Schneider

A story I love to tell at the various banquets and breakfasts I speak at is about Paul Schneider, the former N.U. trainer and one of the program directors at the new Devaney Center.

I love to tell about the time I was driving Paul out to Misty's for a little lunch and a brief visit about the prospects for the coming year, which is always my favorite subject. En route, we saw a minor traffic accident, and while there were no apparent serious injuries, one lady did feel she had a whiplash. Paul and I were called as witnesses in a trial concerning the accident.

Everything seemed to go as expected as the judge called all of us to the stand and in the normal manner told each of us to give our name, our address and our occupation. I told them exactly what I saw.

After they called Paul to the stand, I was a little shocked and as we were leaving the building, I asked him, "Paul, everything was all fine and good, but why in the world did you tell them, when they asked you your name and occupation, that you were the greatest trainer in college football?" Paul quickly answered, "Heck, Wink, I was under oath; I had to tell the truth."

FUN AMONG COACHES

One of the secrets of the Huskers' success, in my estimation, is the fun the coaches have with each other. This results in a loose atmosphere for the players.

Good old "Iron Mike" Corgan is always on the receiving end with the coaches for his sloppy rubber sweat shirt and baggy pants, but he garners absolute respect from his players.

At an early scrimmage last fall, defensive co-ordinator Lance Van Zandt came over to the east sidelines and tipped me off about a little impending fun. In each workout, Coach John Melton, the linebacker mentor, has his charges run sideways over the blocking dummies, lying on the ground.

Van Zandt tipped me off to watch. As the likable Melton said, "Let's go, men," the spokesman for the linebackers replied, "No, Coach, we've made up our minds we're not going to do this anymore."

It didn't take more than five seconds for John to realize it was a put-up joke, as everyone on the sidelines was grinning.

Yes, a loose atmosphere makes a winner and our beloved Cornhuskers are certainly that.

Coach Jim Ross

Jim Ross is one of the coaches so instrumental in the success of Nebraska football.

He is one of my all-time favorite people and we love to needle each other, but after the fun is over, he is all business. I knew many freshmen who played under him when he was coach of the Husker yearlings in 1969-1975. They all swore by him as being more than a coach — a father, brother, counselor, an

advisor, or whatever any young man needs in his first year away from home.

The following is a story which has been told to me many times by various members of the N.U. coaching staff and was once printed by Randy York, the ace Lincoln Journal and Star sports writer.

I believe, however, Jim Walden, a former Wyoming quarterback and an assistant coach at N.U., tells the story the best on getting advice from Coach Ross. The Husker mentor called him into his office in the spring of 1958 for a visit. This was going to be Coach Devaney's second year at the helm in Wyoming and the handsome Walden was a transfer student and a fine quarterback prospect. Ross was counseling several athletes and Jim was among them.

Walden was asked to stop by Ross's office shortly after the university's administration office had sent out downslips. Walden was below passing in two courses.

When Walden walked into Ross's office, he was uncertain what the visit was going to be about but hoped it was to talk football. Instead, the coy Ross started asking questions about Walden's hometown of Aberdeen, Mississippi.

Walden admits he was taken back by Ross's sudden interest in his hometown and family as the coach asked, "How are the folks?" "What is the weather like in Mississippi this time of year?" "Is there a lot of fishing in your area?" "What is the job situation like down there?" and "Is there much new industry coming into your area?" "And, by the way, what do the jobs pay?"

The Mississippi native was so proud to tell Coach Ross that they did have a large lumber business in the area, that the pay was approximately \$1.70 an hour for a starter and that many of his high school teammates were employed there.

Then the cagey Ross, who is the only man I know who could sell silicone shots to Dolly Parton, hit him with the big one. "By the way, what would a janitor make in some factory like that?"

The confused Walden answered, "Janitor? Gee, I don't know for sure, but I'd guess a lot less than that. Why do you ask?"

Coach Ross hit him with the haymaker as he developed a little harshness in his voice and countered, "Well, you better be finding out because the way your grades are going here, you are

going to be out of school soon, and looking for a job — and I'll guarantee you that you'll be in competition with the janitor."

Coach Ross doesn't have a better booster in this world than Walden, who is now the head coach at Washington State.

Jim Cusick, Crowd Control Coordinator

Jim Cusick, a fine gentleman, has the responsible job of being coordinator of first aid, ushering and crowd control in the stadium. He also heads up the emergency program and will likely be the man to carry me out of Memorial Stadium on a stretcher some day. Jim, who has been working in various capacities in this department for 30 years, comments that last fall was the first time in 25 years he was able to have lunch with his wife before a game.

He unlocks the gates at 11:30 a.m., about two hours ahead of kickoff, and holds down the fort until gate keepers take over around noon.

One of the classic stories he tells is about the time a rather diminutive but well-dressed man of around 70 called him over to one of the gates shortly after he unlocked it and told him that his mother (who would have to have been about 90) went in with a couple other ladies to use the rest room and didn't return. The old fellow wondered if he could go in and find her. Jim, having a heart, really didn't believe this unlikely story, but he thought what the heck, so he let him in.

As no great surprise, the man never returned, but as Jim became busy preparing for the huge throng, he just laughed it off.

Late in the game when Jim and his crew were rushing to give first-aid to some fan, he happened to spot the fellow in the top row of the southwest bleachers. After Cusick's crew served their mission, Jim dropped back to get the old codger's attention. He asked if he ever found his mother. The poor chap looked embarrassed and admitted he hadn't. He sadly asked Jim if he wanted him to leave or if he could keep watching for her. Jim told me that he just couldn't bring himself to put this poor guy out because this was probably the highlight of his life. And he bets that every one of the old gent's friends have heard how he conned the "top brass" out of a spot in the bleachers.

Cusick also tells a side-splitter about the fellow who was drinking quite heavily in the stadium and was finally spotted by

the liquor detail. One of the officers asked him to step to the aisle and bring his bottle with him. The fellow, seeing he was caught, had made up his mind the officials were not going to confiscate his booze. He took the bottle and tried to break it on the concrete steps. To his surprise, most of the spirits went inside his shoe when the container finally broke. As he walked out of the aisle with the officer, everyone could hear his foot swishing. Talk about getting cold feet.

Jim Pittenger

One of the all-time class gentlemen I know is Jim Pittenger, former N.U. ticket manager and assistant athletic director.

"Pitt," as he is fondly known, has served on so many university and community functions, they are impossible to mention. In his many years as ticket manager, he has had a trillion funny stories happen to him, a few of which he has shared with me.

Several years ago, some chap wrote in and asked for the seat next to him and his wife, adding, "We need more room and I'm embarrassed to tell you why. But I'll put it this way. My wife has a Volkswagon-type figure. All her weight is in the rear!"

Another classic that made Pitt chuckle is one about a fellow who came in personally to get a couple individual tickets to games. He told this rather depressing story. "When my wife and I were first married, she told me that I was only interested in two things. Football and one other. Now I've forgotten what the other was. So please, get me a couple season tickets."

Some of the oldest and most often told stories are about fans having problems dividing their tickets following a divorce. One such couple divided four tickets. Now when they sit in the stadium, they let their new spouses sit together while the former mates sit on the outside.

Pitt used to laugh until the tears rolled down his cheeks when he told about the avid N.U. fan getting a divorce and splitting four season ducats. On Valentine's Day he sent his ex this literary gem:

"You took my heart and most of my dough — you little Dickens

But I'll fight to my death — to keep my season tickets."

Dr. Keith Broman, Big Eight Faculty Representative

A credit to the University of Nebraska is Dr. Keith Broman, our Big Eight Faculty Representative.

Dr. Broman relates this story which many might find more painful than funny. This past winter after the NCAA meeting in New Orleans, many of the Big Eight group went out to dinner. As there were several people at their table, someone asked the waitress if she could bring them separate checks. She replied no and put the bill on one check which she handed to Barry Switzer, the Oklahoma coach.

Several of the University of Nebraska group, including Dr. Broman and his wife, Ruth, started to hand Switzer enough money for their tab. To this, the quick-witted Switzer remarked with a sly grin, "Just let it go; I guess Nebraska has done enough for me."

I guess he knows how to hurt a guy!

Helen Ruth Wagner, Ticket Manager

One of the toughest jobs in existence is held by Helen Ruth Wagner, the Nebraska ticket manager.

I don't think anyone could handle the position as well as this beautiful human being. Fortunately she is blessed with some of the finest helpers possible as they do such a creditable job in pressure-packed situations.

She tells about one fan who writes, "This is the 13th year I have requested tickets. I have gone from middle age to a senior citizen."

Another writes, "I will kill for two tickets."

From a newly-wed comes this beaut, "I want two tickets for my honeymoon, and if not available, one will be okay." (What's he going to do, leave her back at the motel?)

A thank you note says, "Thank you for the ticket I got last year — now I need four."

Still another writes, "Remember when I talked to you about those football tickets last May? Hi! This is Harold."

I remember Mrs. Wagner sharing a couple unusual requests with me last winter when she told about a lady who says her daughter is under psychiatric care and the only thing that helps her is going to Nebraska football games. (This is contrary to my wife's opinion since she maintains that after going through a few more of those fourth quarter finishes against Oklahoma, I am going to be in the "boobie-hatch" for good.)



Helen Ruth Wagner has the toughest job in America.

Another fellow writes Helen Ruth that he has been buying tickets from scalpers and, being a fine Christian fellow, his conscience hurts him and he would gladly pay more money for a couple tickets. He feels if he pays his money to the University instead of the scalpers it would be legal and this would ease his guilt feelings.

Helen Ruth doesn't know this, but one chap told me that he was worried that his wife's cooking was going to do him in. He honestly feels his wife and her mother are out to get him sent to that Great Gridiron in the Sky so they can inherit his football tickets. He must be the fellow I talk about in one of my speeches who has a sign on his office wall that says, "Just cause I'm paranoid — doesn't mean they're not out to get me."

Gib Babcock, Former Equipment Manager

Retired equipment manager Gib Babcock is one of the finest men that has ever been on the Nebraska staff.

Now living in North Loup enjoying the golden years of his retirement, Gib has so many memories about the Huskers and the glorious winning years that he says he doesn't know where to begin when we start swapping stories.

He does remember one thing that was especially funny: the time the team was training a few days in the Brownsville-Matamoros, Texas, area for one of the bowl games with the Bear, because weather was so bad in Lincoln.

Gib recalls that every day the shoe-shine boys around the hotels would continuously keep after the coaches and players to get a shoe shine. They kept up the chant, "Shoe-Shine — only 15¢"

Finally, Carl Selmer, the Husker offensive line coach, gave in and said, "Okay, give me one." The boy said, "Okay, lift your foot." So Carl stood with one foot off the ground and Gib related, "The boy gave him the best shine I have ever seen. His shoe sparkled like a new coin."

Finally, the little boy looked up at the handsome Selmer and said, "Okay, mister, for another 15¢ I'll get the other one."

Gib chuckles as he remarks, "I'll tell you one thing — that boy'll never end up being an equipment manager or a real estate man — why he'll be a big bank president some day."

John Sanders, N.U. Baseball Coach

A story I love to tell is about one of the fine young men that I had the pleasure of seeing grow up in Grand Island, John Sanders, the N.U. baseball coach.

John was without a doubt one of the finest multi-talented young men I ever knew.

His dad, Cliff Sanders, was a pretty fair ball player in the Nebraska semi-pro circles and so had great aspirations for his



Coach John Sanders

son. When John was only five or six, "Big Cliff" had instilled all his knowledge in the young man and preached what it was to be a winner.

One day Esther, Johnny's lovely mother, frantically called Cliff at the Grand Island railroad depot and told him to get home immediately as son John had thrown a baseball through the neighbor's window and "Grand Island's Finest" were on the scene. In fact, she was crying out loud as she was so upset with the prospects of her cute little redheaded son spending the night in the city slammer.

The always cool and collected Cliff was never known to raise his voice to his beautiful wife except this once when he screamed — "Forget the cops and all that other darned stuff — which way did he throw it — left or right handed?"

Dr. Robert Koefoot, Grand Island, Nebraska Board of Regents

One of the craziest stories I know actually happened when Dr. Robert Koefoot and his co-hort Pete Hedgecock, Grand Island Big Red booster deluxe, attended the Huskers' trip to the Orange Bowl in the Auburn game, January 1, 1964.

Both of these chaps made a vow they were going to prove to the Miami natives that the Nebraska fans were fun-loving people.

During the festivities, they broke all records for taking in every pre-game party in existence and if there wasn't a party in progress, they started one.

My son, Chuck, and I sat in front of these two fellows at the game, and, believe me, Dean Martin and Phil Harris would have been proud to have been included in their fun. Their good natured fun was contagious, spurred on by the Huskers' win over tough Auburn, causing thousands of victory-starved Nebraska fans to really rock southern Florida.

After leaving the stadium with the other 72,000 plus fans, the "Good Doctor" and "Pistol Pete" wanted to get downtown and get to the scene of the action. However, they found their bus, which was going to take them back to the motel where the Huskers were staying, mired down in traffic. Having a dire need to find a little boys' room they decided to run across the street to a home where a little woman was sitting on her porch literally stunned by the wild celebrations which were unfolding before her eyes. Neither one of these fellows are what you

could call bashful Nebraska farms boys, so they asked the sweet little woman if they could possibly use her bathroom and — quick! She said it was okay. When they left the premises they politely thanked her and gave her a sparkling \$5 bill.

Both admit to this day it was the wisest five spot they ever spent.

I have been in Miami to several of the Orange Bowl trips with the Huskers and I have tried in vain to spot this particular little woman and I can't say this to be the absolute truth, but Norris Anderson, the Key Biscayne "Man of all seasons" and a popular Orange Bowl celebrity, admits that after every game this sweet little lady sits on her porch hoping she sees these two "big spenders" heading her way again.

Former Coach Lance Van Zandt

Before Coach Van Zandt departed for New Orleans for what we all hope is a start of a famous professional football coaching career, I had a nice visit with the handsome Texan and he related this true chuckler to me.

Before Lance had officially made up his mind to take the New Orleans coaching job under his former cohort, Bum Phillips, he was attending a meeting of several of the Saints coaches, at least five of whom he was associated with before, mostly at Oklahoma State. All five were quite familiar with the problems the Huskers have with the Oklahoma Sooners each fall.

In this meeting one of the coaches, Harold Richards, piped up with this "show stopper." "You realize, Lance, that we're all pulling for you to come to the Saints, as we all know Coach Barry Switzer of Oklahoma will try to schedule an exhibition game with us."

As this likeable Texan was clowning around with the coaches and players on one of his last days in Lincoln before departing for his new job, the air was sort of cleared by this tid-bit. Mike Fultz and Dan Pensick, two of the young men from Nebraska that were on the New Orleans' roster, told about a Saints defensive back, retiring this year after 11 years in the pro ranks and a former player under Lance at West Texas State. This defensive standout told some of his teammates, "Man, I'm glad I'm retiring this year because that Lance is a tough hombre!"

Van Zandt laughingly admitted to me that he was going to try to contact the player and ask him to postpone his retirement for at least another year, "until I can get used to my new personnel." He then confided to me, "You know, Wink, I've mellowed down through the years!"

I replied, "Yes, I believe you, Lance, but will he?"

Plaque for Coach Mike Corgan

A few years back Bus Whitehead, the Lincoln oil magnate and a former Husker cager deluxe, did something that I'll always remember as top-class.

He took a plaque over to Mike Corgan, the Husker backfield coach, in honor of the fact that he is probably the only college backfield coach that had all four members of his backfield go into the pros.

The backfield of Jerry Tagge, quarterback; Johnny Rodgers, wingback; Jeff Kinney, running back and Bill Olds at fullback were all drafted into pro-ball.

This of course was quite a feat. Without giving it a lot of research, about the only other complete college backfield I remember going into the pros was a couple of the Oklahoma backfields featuring Billy Sims and crew and the great Stanford backfield that defeated us in the Rose Bowl.

The old timers say this Stanford backfield could have been the best ever, but I'll wager the Husker foursome from that 1971 juggernaut wouldn't have to take a back seat to anyone.

Still Another Plaque

One of the stories that always warms my heart is the one about Monte Anthony and his teammate, Dodie Donnell, two of the premier backs to play for the Huskers in the past few years, and Nebraska's great backfield coach, Mike Corgan.

You have to twist Corgan's arm to get this story out of him because he is very modest about his great knack of teaching young men to block. Of course, if he were talking about his old pickup truck, modesty would be thrown out the window. He admits it is so old he is the only chap in Lincoln that has insurance on it for Indian raids.

When it comes to fundamentals in football, blocking and tackling lead the list. I would put Coach Corgan as a blocking coach with the best of them. It was heart-rendering to find out



Coach Mike Corgan — “You can see Wink, I’m not just a pretty face.”

that Anthony and Donnell, two of Corgan’s prize pupils, purchased a plaque and had it engraved as follows, “To The Greatest Blocking Coach in Football” and left it on his desk. Coach John Melton said that Big Mike almost bit his pipe in half when he saw it.

Of course the two star proteges of Corgan lay low as they knew Mike would scold them for wasting their money on such a trivial thing. Mike, however, spotted them in a Lincoln movie theater one night, crept up beside them and whispered in their ears, “You know there’s an old saying — a fool and his money are soon parted, and if you two guys don’t have something better to do with your money, I don’t feel sorry for you.”

Strangely enough though, I sort of caught a little mist in Mike’s eyes as he admitted this story was true.

Coaches The Lost Hunters

A story that always brings guffaws from any audience is the one about the time Jim Ross and Don Bryant, the assistant athletic directors, were hunting in Canada.

After hunting several hours they finally determined they were lost. Finally Ross said, “Let’s not panic, Foxie, there’s got to be a way out of here.”

The Fat Fox replied, “You’re right. I read that if you are

lost, you shoot three times into the air and someone will come and find you.”

So they did, but nothing happened. And they did it again, and still no help came. They repeated this several times without results.

Finally Ross said, “What are we gonna do now?”

Foxie replied, “You’ve got me Jim — we are almost out of arrows.”

Walt Johnson — Assistant Equipment Manager

Walt Johnson is sort of like a dad to the freshmen athletes who enroll at N.U.

In fact his lovely daughter, Vicki Cartwright, is completing her first year as a secretary in the Sports Information Office and is a very fine addition to this great group.

A couple of years ago a freshman back who was known as a real speedster was checking out his football equipment. The former prep phantom asked for a pair of white shoes. When the personable Johnson told him it was against N.U. policy to wear white shoes, the boy replied, “Why, it is a known fact that a player can run faster in a pair of white shoes.”

Walt, who never loses his cool, calmly replied, “Son, are you trying to tell me that if you put on a white shoe on one foot and a black shoe on the other, the one leg would be faster than the other?”



Kerry Weinmaster — one of our best ever.



Bill Kosch — teamed with hometown Joe Blahak for two great ones.



Rich Bahe — Mr. Dependable

Chapter 26

Courage is a Guy Named Budge Porter

In all my days of following sports I have seen just about every courageous thing one could hope for. But the display of heroism that will always stick in my mind is that of my good friend, Budge Porter.

There isn't enough room in this whole book to cover the remarkable things this fantastic young athlete has accomplished.

I first heard about this third generation future Husker when he was burning up the athletic fields and basketball courts at Nebraska City. He was all-conference two years in the Twin Rivers League and was named honorable mention on the all-state football teams.

In 1974 he was awarded a football scholarship to the University of Nebraska, the dream of any athlete in the state.

I remember watching him play like a future All-Big Eight performer in the Shrine Football Game the next summer and go on to a brilliant freshman year on the undefeated 1974 frosh eleven, Coach Jim Ross's next-to-last team.

After a knee injury which required surgery, he made a remarkable recovery which even amazed the doctors. Some people didn't know the determination that this wonderful young man had.

After a red-shirt year in 1975, this outstanding prospect was number two on the depth chart, behind All-American candidate Dave Butterfield, a senior, in the spring of 1976.

Just a week before the spring game, he was making a tackle on I.M. Hipp, then an unknown back, when he collided with an assisting linebacker. He received a fractured vertebra in his neck and was paralyzed from the neck down. For several weeks he was confined to Bryan Memorial Hospital in Lincoln where he had no feeling and movement from his shoulders down to his toes.

The next three and one-half years, Budge progressed through four hospitals from near death and total quadraplegia, to take on the most determined rehabilitation efforts I have ever seen. In the face of continued disappointments and

set-backs, this young man never lost his faith. He learned to drive his own car equipped with hand controls. He attended classes, facing some of his toughest challenges, while trying to enter many of U.N.L.'s buildings not built to handle wheelchair students.

No picture will ever be burned in my mind like the one in the *Omaha World-Herald*, showing this determined young man walking down the aisle at the Devaney Sports Center to get his diploma with the other 2,000 graduating seniors this past spring.



Mort Porter — Budge Porter "The All-American Family"

Nothing warmed my heart more than to see Budge and his dad on the sidelines at the Husker football games and to see him visiting with the other players and helping celebrate the many victories in the dressing room after the games. Budge had almost as many autograph seekers around him as some of our super-stars. He was an inspiration to the whole team.

Yes, Budge's autograph was written by a hand that symbolized courage at its best, and his gallant and brave effort to walk made him an All-American of the highest degree.

Budge certainly symbolizes all that a handicapped person can become. I'd rather have working for me a young man like Budge Porter, who knows the pangs of defeat and disappointments than a person who's never faced a struggle and could not conquer it.

Budge didn't complain or say he got a tough break. He took his lumps with an ever-present smile and now he spends his spare time encouraging his brother, Scott, a sophomore Husker

fullback, who was also cut down by the injury jinx during spring drills. He also has a sister, Jane, a junior pom-pom girl at Nebraska.

One thing that Mike Fitzpatrick, the former football coach at Central Catholic in Grand Island and now a resident of Papillion, says he will never forget is the time that Coach Osborne made sure Budge got a championship ring when the team tied for the Big-Eight Title in 1978. Mike says the day he measured Budge for the ring, (Mike is the Balfour representative in this area) it was one of the happiest moments in Budge's life. "Fitz" says that the day he delivered the ring and took it out of the box and put it on Porter's finger was one of the happiest moments in his life. I certainly agree with Mike; this was a wonderful gesture on Coach Osborne's part.

For years I kept a poem written by my good friend Norrie Anderson, when he wrote his famous column, "The Firing Line" in the Lincoln Star. It was printed in the early 1950's but I think it describes the courage of Budge Porter.

An All-American Who is an All-American

The test of a man is the fight he makes, the grit that he daily shows;

The way that he stands on his feet and takes Fate's numerous bumps and blows.

It isn't the victory, after all, but the fight that a human makes;

The man, who, driven against the wall, still stands erect and takes

The blows of fate with head held high, bleeding and bruised and pale.

Is the man who'll win in the by and by, for he isn't afraid to fail.

Fond But Sad Memories

One of the things I'll always remember fondly, but with some disappointment, was the signing of professional baseball contracts by John Sanders and Dave McDonald of Grand Island. I remember when John signed with Kansas City. After he put his name on the professional contract for Whitey Herzog, now the manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, John tried to call me immediately to break the news to me first, since he knew I wanted him to go to Nebraska to continue his athletic career.

Somewhere along the line the message to return his call got mislaid and when I didn't return it, he was concerned that I was upset with him. While it was a disappointment not to see John play for the Big Red I was thrilled about his future.

Also, I remember when Dave McDonald, the All-State Islander of 1960, decided to sign a professional contract. He came to me and thanked me for all my support and offered an apology for signing to play professional baseball as he knew I wanted him to go to Nebraska, to follow his father, Les, a former Husker great of the mid-1930's.

Many local fans have asked me if either one of these boys could have played varsity ball at Nebraska and, in both cases, I feel they would have been fine Husker gridders not to mention the great contribution they would have made for the N.U. baseball program.

McDonald was a great punter besides being a standout end, and Sanders was probably one of the finest prep quarterbacks I've ever seen.

Also Sanders was like having another coach on the field in all sports he participated in and no Grand Island fan will ever forget his brilliant passes to Tom Milsap, the speedy, multi-talented Islander, who is one of the finest basketball coaches in Nebraska prep circles. The strong armed Sanders would lay the pigskin over Milsap's shoulder similar to the old Johnny Unitas-Lennie Moore combination in the surging days of the Baltimore Colts.

Those were sad moments for Nebraska football, but I'll remember these fine athletes having the courtesy to give me a call to say, "I'm sorry that I'm not going to Nebraska."



Chapter 27

Inside Husker Stories

Vince Ferragamo

The real big men on any college campus are the security guards. I found this out when Otto Baumann, head of the Californians for Nebraska fan group, and I were showing some talented west coast athletes around Memorial Stadium. Such future stars as Vince Ferragamo and Dave Shamblin and an eventual All-American guard at Southern California were among the high school athletes taking the tour. We had taken the lads to the stadium to watch a Husker scrimmage, but since it was a rainy day, Otto and I decided to escort the recruiting prospects inside the press box. The lower level of this section, used by the working press, is always closed off to the public, but Otto and I thought this would be a great spot to take refuge from the weather. Since it was not a game day, there was plenty of seating available for our guests. No sooner had we seated the athletes than a security guard came at us and angrily chased us out. Among his reasons for booting us out was that he was afraid somebody in our party might plant a bomb. (This was a time when such things were common on campuses). Otto and I later joked that either one of us looked like a mad bomber, though I, for one, need help in lighting a firecracker.

Of course, this wasn't very impressive to these prep stars, looking for a campus with a friendly atmosphere, but the security guard was only doing his job. At the time I couldn't help wondering if he was new in the state or just hated football.



Otto Baumann — "A first class recruiter."

We lost Vince in the initial recruiting battle. He spent two years at California on the Berkeley campus before deciding he should have come to Nebraska in the first place. Otto gave me a call one Sunday afternoon in August to give me the good news. I had heard the rumor earlier, but "The Big O" made it official. On the phone, he also told me that he had invited the Ferragamo family to stop in Grand Island, when they were traveling down the interstate, to have lunch with me.

About 10 the following morning, I received a call from Vince, Sr., informing me that the Ferragamos were at North Platte and would reach Grand Island about noon. We agreed to meet at the I-80 Holiday Inn. I drove out with Grand Island attorney John Wolf, a great Nebraska fan and very knowledgeable about the program. Only on the way out he kept asking how we would be able to recognize the Ferragamo family. I assured him that I may not always remember everyone's face, but I would never forget the tall, dark and handsome Vince Ferragamo. Even saying only that much about Vince's striking appearance is sort of like describing Orson Wells as pleasingly plump.

Sure enough, it was very easy to spot this beautiful family, very enthused about Vince's decision to go to Nebraska. Vince, Sr., is one of my favorite football fathers and his wife, Stella, is blessed with a charming sense of humor, laughing from the bottom of her heart. The problem during the visit was that I was seated between Vince and John Wolf, sort of a matinee idol in his own right. It was like sitting between Burt Reynolds and Robert Redford. I could only think of some words of wisdom once directed at me by Jack McConnell, a Grand Island radio celebrity about why he always looks so young. "It's easy," he said. "I always hang around with older people." I've never been able to follow that advice. I'm coming to the age in my life where I can't find anyone older.

One of my later get-togethers with the Ferragamo family was on Vince's wedding day in Omaha when he married Jody Scarpello, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Scarpello of Omaha. This is the largest wedding I've ever attended and I can't remember meeting so many celebrities at the same time. In fact, I think I was the only person there I hadn't heard of. A personal thrill was meeting one of my favorite boxers, Carl Vinciguerra, a great heavyweight golden glover and member of the 1936 Olympic team. The debonair Omaha champ still looks like he

could go a couple of rounds with Muhammed Ali.

Now that Vince has pulled up stakes and headed north to the Canadian Football League, he's stepping out of the limelight he enjoyed as a Super Bowl quarterback in pro football. But he can rest assured that his many Nebraska fans will still follow his illustrious career very closely and back him every step of the way.

George Andrews

One of Vince's handsome teammates, at Nebraska and later with the Los Angeles Rams, was George Andrews. Recently, I had the opportunity to have a nice chat with George during an airplane flight. I had just finished speaking at a banquet in Chadron and hopped a plane from Scottsbluff to Denver en route to Atlanta, Ga., where I was appearing at a Speakers Showcase. On the plane I had a chance to visit with George, who was returning to Lincoln after a Fellowship of Christian Athletes speaking engagement in Scottsbluff. It was nice to learn that pro football hadn't done anything to diminish the great values of George Andrews. It's young men such as George who are a credit to athletics and what sports should be about.

Steve Davies

One of my favorite stories is about Steve Davies, the pride of Murray, Utah, and a fine tight end with Nebraska for the past couple of years. He confesses he is a little bit worried about this fall's game with Iowa even though he has graduated.

When Nebraska renewed its series with Iowa two years ago, Steve's wife, Julie, had given birth to a baby girl on the night before. Last year, on the Thursday before the Iowa game, Steve's wife gave birth to a son.

"I'm glad I'm a senior," Steve jokes. "I don't know what would happen if we had to play against the Hawks again next year."

Keith Wortman

Otto Baumann sent me a clipping from the St. Louis-Globe Democrat when the 1970-71 offensive line star of Nebraska's national championship team was found guilty of drunken driving and placed on six months probation in the fall of 1980.

The clipping, an interview with Mrs. Lynn Ferrel of Hannibal, Mo., talked about the other side of Keith Wortman.

"On a snowy, icy Saturday afternoon, Jan., 20, 1979, (I remember that date well because our son, Richard, died of cancer two days later, remembered Mrs. Ferrel) Keith Wortman visited our home in Hannibal and spent at least two hours talking to Richard about lifting weights, the Super Bowl, his dog and many other things that would interest a 12-year-old sports enthusiast," Mrs. Ferrel wrote.

"I like to think that from everything bad that happens in life, something good will come of it. Instead of Keith's picture, standing in a courtroom, I see him reclining on the side of Richard's bed, smiling nervously, hoping he is saying the right thing to a total stranger who is terminally ill."

It is a touching story and Otto Baumann is the one who passed it along to the right people in Missouri. Keith Wortman, No. 65, is one of the class gentlemen to ever play football at Nebraska. His mistake will never detract from the high esteem he has in my eyes.

William Vincent

Bill Vincent was a basketball star, not a football player. Yet, he won't easily be found in written accounts of Nebraska basketball. Fate gave Bill very little opportunity to write any Nebraska basketball history.

I read about the death of Bill Vincent on my birthday, June 21, 1963. My wife had planned a picnic for me and being in the real estate business at the time, I had spent the day busier than a one-armed paper hanger. I had arrived home late that evening and was rushing to take off my tie and change clothes for the picnic and I glanced at the headline in The Grand Island Independent, "Husker Ace Killed." I was fearful to read on, but with great sorrow I learned that the Omaha South basketball star and Nebraska varsity performer had been killed in a head-on accident in Iowa, where he had been driving a bread truck in a rain storm.

It is always a tragedy to learn that any American boy has died with his life before him. Vincent was a true loss to Nebraska basketball coach Jerry Bush. I always think of Bill Vincent when someone mentions a great athlete the world will never know because an injury or great tragedy has taken him from the world of sports.

Derrie Nelson

Derrie Nelson is one of the great athletes who rose at the top in Nebraska sports, and the success of this defensive end represents what makes Nebraska football such a personal love with me. Derrie is a Nebraska small town success story.

There have been many and Derrie is typical. He earned the awe of his opponents in high school but came to Nebraska as a walk-on athlete. He had a limited role on the freshmen team, playing behind scholarship players, and was red-shirted. But he never lost his enthusiasm or courage.

In spring football when life for an athlete is most grueling, Derrie was at his best and it was easy to see he had the spirit it takes to become a nationally-acclaimed player.

When Francis Rose, an outstanding Fairmont businessman, invited me to speak to their Chamber of Commerce Christmas party, I was elated to find out that evening that Derrie was the nephew of Bob Cerv, a former basketball and baseball great at Nebraska and a former Major Leaguer. This was in the days when "Dangerous Derrie," as I fondly called him, was still developing as a sophomore. I predicted a brilliant career for this young man, with almost certain Big-Eight honors and even possible All-American honors if the injury jinx didn't hit him. Of course, this wasn't a difficult determination when I found out he had the same fighting blood in his veins that made Bob Cerv one of the toughest competitors I've ever seen on any athletic field or floor.



Derrie Nelson

A couple years later when Nelson raged through the Missouri line to toss their star quarterback, Phil Bradley, for a huge loss and the game winning tackle, this prediction flashed back through my mind. This electrifying tackle stopped the Tigers from their game-winning touchdown drive and made Derrie a living memory. Thanks for making me look like a hero, Derrie, and I wish you a fine professional football career.

Ed Burns

One of the most amazing people to ever wear a Nebraska uniform was Ed Burns. He was a dropback passer at Omaha Rommel who never made it any higher than third string at Nebraska. Yet he had the savvy to make the roster of the New Orleans Saints. Ed continued to play three years with the Saints and had thrown a touchdown pass against the Houston Oilers in 1980, just two weeks before he was cut. At this writing he is invited back to their fall camp and I hope he makes it big.

Randy York of the Lincoln Journal and Star covered the Ed Burns story in a phone interview and it is truly phenomenal. Burns said he never had any hard feelings about his years at Nebraska, yet, he had the savvy to make the roster of the New Orleans Saints and Ed said he could never adjust his footwork quite right to become an adept ball handler.

But no Nebraska fan will ever forget the emotional moment in Memorial Stadium in 1977 when Ed Burns, never giving up in five years of trying, took the field in the fourth quarter against Kansas. He received a tremendous standing ovation as he entered the huddle and the tears welled up in the eyes of the fans around the stadium as he guided the Nebraska team downfield for a score. When he scored on a keeper play from the three-yard line, it was a credit to Coach Osborne to call this play from the bench as Ed certainly would not have called his own signal. Also they tell me that the offensive linemen blocked like they never blocked before because they wanted this great human being to put one on the board himself.

Now the father of four children, Ed says it is his wife and former high school sweetheart who never lost faith in him. The University of Nebraska is a better place because of athletes like Ed Burns. Often they contribute more to a team's success than the superstars. Many will achieve higher success on the field, but few live a life so rich as Ed and his lovely family.

Don Erway

Nobody will ever know the pain that was a constant companion of Don Erway during the mid 1950's. Don was one of the great and versatile athletes of his era. But his career ended unhappily when he had to pass up his senior year of football because of arthritic knees.

Yet as long as he wore a Husker uniform, Don never quit working despite the searing pain throbbing in his knees. He played during a time when players went both ways. Don was a key to both units. On offense, he played quarterback and as a cornerback, he called the defensive signals. He punted, kicked off and booted the extra points. The only thing he didn't do was help my old buddy, Pop Klein, in the concession stands during the half.

Despite the pain, Don played 459 minutes of a possible 600 during his junior year, which should be worthy of two letters, not just one. His departure left a very difficult void for the Huskers to fill.

Don also was an all-state basketball player at Lincoln High in 1953 and a promising catcher in baseball. I remember watching him catch for the Kearney Irishmen of the fast Nebraska Independent League, managed by Floyd Stickney, the "Mr. Baseball" of Central Nebraska. My father-in-law, Mark Clevenger, Sr., rarely missed watching him play and always told me that Don's trademark with a bat or glove was hustle.

Carl Samuelson

Some great athletes have drawn little notice on the Nebraska campus for many reasons. For Carl Samuelson, one of the best high school players to hail from Grand Island, the reason was World War II. "Big Sam" enrolled at Nebraska in 1942 and then left for a hitch in the Navy. When he came back from the service, his heart no longer was in college football. He played two years under Bernie Masterson but then turned professional and played four seasons with the Pittsburgh Steelers at defensive end.

Carl was noted for his awesome stature and feared nothing, although he admitted he would not relish hand-to-hand combat with his big brother, Ed. Despite the challenges of the war, college football and pro football, Carl says he was only scared once. He was appearing in a movie and worked hard on his

speaking part, before delivering his line with a flair that would have made Richard Burton proud. His line? "I'm hungry."

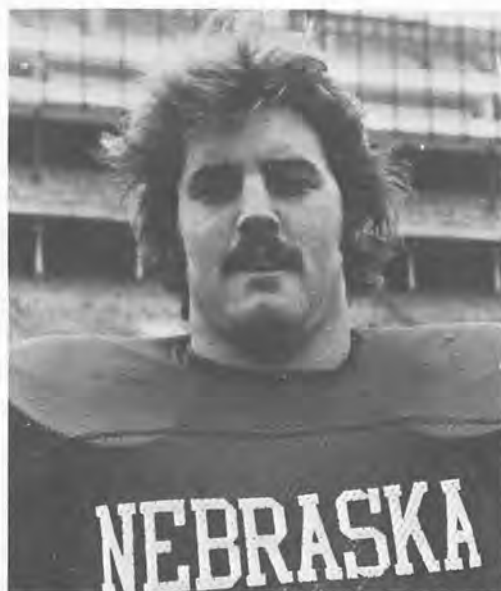
Steve Glenn

One of my favorite players is Steve Glenn, the former Pawnee City offensive tackle. Steve was never a starter but he was another one of those players whose contributions can't be measured in statistics.

Steve also is proof that playing football under coach Tom Osborne is far from dull. Steve is one of the players that kept things lively. At the close of the 1978 season, Nebraska was preparing for its Orange Bowl rematch with Oklahoma. The players were still grim from the news of the rematch with the Sooners and Steve decided to break the tension.

Before one December practice, he smuggled a Santa Claus suit into his locker. When the team took the field in full gear for a scrimmage, Steve emerged in the Santa Claus suit and ran about wildly on the Memorial Stadium carpet. The practice came to a sudden stop as Steve drew howls from players and coaches alike.

Steve always was one to make grueling work interesting



Steve Glenn — "If he would go into politics, he would be president some day."

and once saw an opportunity to stir practice up after taking some good-natured ribbing about his less-than-blinding speed. At the start of fall camp, each player must run 1½ miles on the opening day of practice. Steve carefully prepared for the moment, borrowing a sign from his mother's farm near Pawnee City which read, "Slow Moving Vehicle." Steve posted the sign on his back and had players and coaches slapping their knees.

His teammates later instigated the fun when Steve began taking his harmonica on road trips. At first, Steve played on despite a bus load of music critics who hurled continual barbs. As the trips continued, teammates finally begged him to stop. But when Steve continued playing, a plot was hatched. On one bus trip, Steve was locked in the rest room until a search party found his mouth harp in his luggage and playfully disposed of it. Steve says, today, that the incident may have denied him a career on the Lawrence Welk show.

Steve will go far in any field and he has a brilliant future as an executive officer with the Nebraska Home Builders Association. He is an exceptional young man in a top-flight organization.

Randy Spiehs

One of the best athletes to come out of Grand Island in any sport is Randy Spiehs. In the 1960's, the Third City strongboy had to choose between football and baseball at Nebraska and became possibly the greatest catcher the school had ever had. Many feel he would have been a great varsity football player.

Though he became a great hitter, Randy had a little trouble in the early days with the curve ball, and one of my favorite stories involves Randy and his batting mentor, assistant coach Bob Gates, who is one of the nicest guys I know. Now the UNO baseball coach, Gates was determined to help "Big Randy" by using his own uncanny ability to figure out what type of pitches were being thrown to the Huskers by the way the opposing hurlers held the baseball.

Gates devised a system where he would name a city east of the Mississippi River if he felt Randy was going to be thrown a fast ball. For example, just before the pitch, Gates would stand in the third base coaching box and yell, "Hit it to Boston!"

If the pitch was going to be a curve ball, Gates would yell, "Hit it to L.A.!" or "Hit it to Denver!", or some other city west of the Mississippi River.

During one crucial game, Randy was at the plate in the game-winning situation as Gates kept tipping him off on the pitches. Randy, however, couldn't find one to his liking and kept fouling off the pitches, causing his coach to reach back into grade-school geography to keep coming up with names of towns. Finally, during a mental lapse, Gates shouted, "Hit it to Waxachie!" Before Spiehs could get himself set geographically, he took a third strike with the bases full.

Thus ended the experiment.

But Randy went on to become a very successful insurance salesman in the Third City and teamed with sidekick Arnie Placke, the proprietor of the Brick Bar, who is known as the "Toots Shor" of Grand Island, to coach some winning Legion baseball teams. The Spiehs and Placke team won most of their outings, but whenever I spot Randy in the audience at a speaking engagement, I identify him as being the only skipper that could manage a team in a doubleheader and lose three games.

Jeff Lee

Jeff is always known as a "big play" receiver, meaning he was the man who ran the deep patterns and was expected to be out for the bomb. But one coach explained Jeff's dilemma this way. "Just how many big plays do you really have in college football?" Excellent point.

Yet it was disappointing not to see his natural abilities become a part of modern Big Red legend. My most memorable thrill involving Jeff wasn't on the playing field. It was at the new Bob Devaney Field House indoor track. Jeff broke in the new facilities right by slamming the low and high hurdles in the 1977 Big Eight indoor meet. That year he went on to win the NCAA 60-yard highs.

Coaches at Nebraska once considered moving Jeff to defense but the idea finally was abandoned since he wasn't all that impressed with it. I truly feel, however, that he would have been an All-Big Eight defensive player on the other side of the line of scrimmage because he had so much natural ability.

Mark Goodspeed

When an injury ends the career of a potentially great player, he must have a strong background to pick up the pieces. This happened to Mark Goodspeed, a highly-recruited product

of Rockhurst High in Kansas City. His career at Nebraska simply was beset with injuries. First, he broke his wrist as a freshman and then a back injury reduced his effectiveness. But Mark, a man molded by strong character, drew encouragement from his parents, the wonderful Jud and Jeanne Goodspeed, and battled for a football career even after college. His ability and desire enabled him to be drafted ninth by the ever alert Miami Dolphins.

Naturally, athletic ability runs in the Goodspeed family and one of the cutest stories I've been told is about Mark's sister, Robin, who was the quarterback of a sorority flag football team at Kansas U., in their "Powder Puff League". She played at the same time Nolan Cromwell was the pride of the Jayhawks and earned the reputation of "Nolan Goodspeed" for her own running ability.

Jud Goodspeed, caught up in his own love for the Huskers, moved his family to Omaha a few years back. He is an airline pilot and I always check for the pilot and crew during my own traveling to see if he is in the cockpit. Then I kid him about the amount of flight insurance I've taken out.

Jeanne Goodspeed is a former model and to this day looks like she could have been one of "Charlie's Angels."

John Bordogna

Some great athletes across the country have played quarterback at Nebraska but one of the toughest was John Bordogna of Turtle Creek, Pa. It has almost been three decades since brilliant Bordogna closed his fabulous career in 1953 and some of his records still stand.

John played in the days when Nebraska wins weren't always plentiful, but he always stood out on the playing field as a rugged individual. Nebraska coaches have told about the day when John had a tooth knocked through his lip but continued playing. In the Penn State game of 1952 at University Park, Bordogna received a jarring elbow from future all-pro Rosie Grier and the blow knocked four teeth from the Husker's mouth. Such a blow today would have been fended off by a noseguard, but the courageous Bordogna never considered leaving the game.

Likeable John was at his best in a 28-13 win over Oregon on a hot, sultry September night in the northwest in 1952. John remembers the whole team was reaching down into the "oxygen

bag" for the last bit of energy the players could muster. But the humidity sapped the strength of players on both sides of the field and John had the most savvy on the game's most dramatic play. He outran the speediest back on the coast, a reputed :09.7 sprinter, on a 70-yard touchdown run. I once asked John how close this "mercury-hoofed" defender came and he joked, "I really don't know. I never looked back; but I'll tell you one thing. I ran like h ____."

I was still on the farm in Ravenna, listening to Lyell Bremser of KFAB broadcast the game when Bordogna broke loose that night. Lyell gave the run two or three, "Man, woman and child" and I let out a couple of war-whoops that woke our month-old daughter, Rebecca. My wife simply rolled her eyes at me and said, "This is going to be a long marriage, isn't it?" My sister-in-law, Joan Meyers, who was staying with us at the time, flatly predicted I'd never reach the ripe-old age of 40.

Now a prominent Lincoln paint contractor, John looks less than a couple of pounds above his playing weight. His enthusiasm for life is still very contagious. It's always heart-warming when young athletes from out of state play out their days with the Huskers and then make their home in Nebraska. It seems their roots sometimes run deeper than those of our native sons and daughters.

The *Nebraska Football Guide*, the Bible of Husker statistics put together each year by Sports Information Director Don Bryant and his fine staff, notes that Bordogna was chosen to the 1953 All-Big Seven team with All-American Jerry Minnick and Ted Conner, the Hastings strongboy, despite a 3-6-1 record by the Huskers. For all his offensive talent, John also would have been a great defensive back in the modern era of two platoons. Some of John's defensive hits are legendary.

John Sherlock

It was a tough decision for another future great, John Sherlock, to decide on playing football at Nebraska. A sophomore red-shirt at tackle, John is a former two-time Class A heavyweight wrestling champion. He was co-Prep Athlete of the Year with great gymnast Phil Cahoy in his high school career. John also has gained national prominence as a grappler.

This fall, the Omaha South strangler is fighting for a berth behind All-American candidate Dan Hurley. The competition is

keen and includes another fine red-shirt, Scott Raridon of Mason City, Iowa. It's not unusual for either of these talented athletes to be sidelined for a year. Most Husker linemen are red-shirted to learn the complicated offense and develop the much-needed timing.

While John has most of his football career to look ahead to, the former wrestling great is not looking back. He is emphatic about his decision to play football. He has no regrets about coming to a school where talent is two or three deep since playing with a winner is worth it all. And I'm sure this handsome dude is looking forward to sunning himself on the Miami beaches a couple times during his promising career.



John Sherlock

Max Linder

Fortunately for me, an athlete's dedication on the field carries into his chosen profession. Such a person was Max Linder, an All-American boy and brilliant student. Max, the Plattsmouth phenom, was outstanding in the 1969 Shrine Bowl game. But when he enrolled in school that fall, medics found a back injury that required surgery. The injury kept Max from

being a great quarterback and though he returned as a pass receiver, it kept Max from his high school form.

Years later, I was plagued with a blocked tear duct in my eye and advised to see a specialist in Omaha. One of the doctors who treated me was Dr. Max Linder. The eye problem was very painful, but I found it comforting to be in the hands of this capable man and enjoyed talking over the old days. Max and my completely-healed eye are living testimony that athletes do come to Nebraska primarily for an education.

Chuck "Skeeter" Malito

There have been some great undersized athletes at Nebraska, but the one that I became so fond of is Chuck "The Mosquito" Malito, now the head coach at Omaha Bishop Ryan. Chuck was always blessed with personality and we often chatted in his early days as a Husker. I couldn't help rooting for the lad, though too thin and not durable enough to play major college football. He would make a nice catch or show his usual enthusiasm and hustle and I'd root for him from the sidelines. He never failed to thank me.

Speed was Chuck's weapon in any sport. But some dared to question the wisdom of the usually sage John Melton for ever recruiting tiny "Skeeter." When Tom Osborne once was asked why he was drafted by the Washington Redskins, he replied, "They were looking for somebody small enough to get through those little holes their offensive line opened up." I borrowed the line when people asked what Nebraska saw in Chuck Malito of Lakewood, Colo.

But Melton's insight was on target as usual. It just took time. When Malito was a red-shirted sophomore, former Husker coach, Jerry Moore, told him, "I don't know of anyone who, if he worked very hard, wouldn't have something good come of it." Chuck took the advice to heart and while coaches debated whether the skinny athlete was Big Eight caliber, Chuck stuck it out on the scout team and finally caught the eye of the varsity coaches by making several great catches.

In track, Chuck developed confidence when he placed seventh in the NCAA indoor 440. Then in a driving rain, he won the Big Eight outdoor quarter-mile in an electrifying race as a sophomore in 1974. I believe this race changed his life around by showing that hard work could pay dividends. In his senior year, he set several school records and came within a hundredth

of a second of making the Olympic trials in the 400 Intermediate Hurdles.

In his senior year in football, Chuck set a school record of most pass reception yardage in one game by grabbing four bullets for 166 yards against Hawaii. In the Astro-Bluebonnet Bowl, he was voted the game's most valuable lineman for catching three passes for 107 yards and a touchdown.

Before coaching at Omaha Bishop Ryan, Chuck first took an assistant coaching job in Midland, Tex., at the former high school of All-American tight end Junior Miller. From there, he went to Los Alamos, N.M., to serve under former Husker tight end Brad Jenkins, now the head coach at Scottsbluff.

Now he is working his way up the coaching ladder the way he did in his football career. With his enthusiasm and Christian values, Chuck has chosen a career where he can do much for the young poeple in our state.

Brad Johnson

There are some great Husker stories in the making. One number I have my eye on is 55, belonging to a young lineman named Brad Johnson. He is the pride and joy of Harvard, a farming community 20 miles east of Hastings. I recently spoke there and assured the wonderful home folks that Brad is going to make them forget another great Harvard hustler, Nebraska line coach Milt Tenopir.

After the speech I said hello to good friends in that area, including Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Sinner. Suddenly a massive shadow swept over the room. I turned, to find not one, but two giants. Since Brad was 6-4 and weighed 230 pounds, I was very glad I had said nothing to offend him. He was now pumping my hand. The only man in the room who would have been strong enough to pull Brad off me would have been his father, Virgil, the second giant.

Seriously, Brad Johnson is a player with promise. He played backup center to Dave Rimington, a Husker so deserving of All-American status. Brad has a strong tradition to live up to — Nebraska has been most richly blessed throughout the years with great centers. Brad looks equal to the task. I've warned Grand Island friend and financier Larry Yost that he's about to lose his hometown title of "The Harvard Hurricane."

Kevin Seibel

I grew a little concerned in the fall of 1980 when Nebraska was playing at Colorado and Kevin Seibel of Vermillion, S.D., boomed a 52-yard field goal. It had been obvious that Kevin was going to boot some long ones in this game because he had been kicking the ball as far as 65 yards during practice in the thin Rocky Mountain air. After his long kick, the handsome South Dakotan had remarked how much fun it was to kick the ball in the thin air.

"Don't you get any ideas of transferring to Colorado," I admonished the likeable Kevin.

"Not on your life," he replied. "No one in his right mind would think of leaving a program like Nebraska's particularly when you can go to a bowl game every year."

I hope to see Kevin booting a few in Miami this next New Year's night, especially since he has a couple of younger brothers watching who have the ability to match his fabulous kicking records at Nebraska.

A Loyal Business Partner

Mark Doak

A California prep star that made it big with the Huskers was Mark Doak. This former Husker lineman was not only matched in size and fellowship by former Hastings St. Cecilia standout of no small proportion, Dennis Pavelka. They became close friends and today are business partners in Lincoln, operating the Sweep Left Lounge eatery. It is one of the finest places of fellowship in eastern Nebraska.

The story behind their partnership is a touching one. After their playing days, "The Doaker," as Mark is fondly known to his friends, and Pavelka were both drafted into the NFL by the Washington Redskins. When he was cut from the squad, Mark joined some other Big Red Stars — Steve Manstedt, Bob Wolfe and Tom Alward — with the Birmingham team from the now-defunct World Football League. When that league folded, Mark signed on with the Denver Broncos as a free agent.

But Doak never went on to play football. A few weeks after signing with the Broncos, Dennis Pavelka was seriously injured in an automobile wreck and not able to work because of back problems. "The Doaker," being the kind of a guy he is, returned his bonus money back to Denver to return to Lincoln

to run the restaurant that he and Dennis had just started.

Today, the Sweep Left is a thriving meeting place where many of the fans go to swap stories about Big Red football. The only cloud on the horizon for Doak and Dennis is that they serve such good food they are their own best customers. To combat the calories, these two entrepreneurs, have added a Health Club in the basement.

These two burly guys have restored many a heavyweight to a Charles Atlas or a Boyd Epley. The only time I ever saw these two giants shed tears was the time I asked them what their health spa could do for me. Trying hard to keep from laughing or crying they replied, "Wink, it makes about as much sense for you to come to our Health Club as it would for Leon Spinks to start seeing an orthodontist."

But Doak and Pavelka know well what a training program can do. Both players became top linemen at Nebraska after being red-shirted. They are among the reasons I'm sold on red-shirting. That extra year provided both players a chance to hit their stride and Mark was a good bet to make it with the Broncos in the NFL had fate not intervened. Their teammate Don Westbrook is another lad who was helped greatly by the red-shirt program and he is still playing with New England at this writing.

ROSE BOWL TEAM FROM LINCOLN

It has been over 40 years since the Rose Bowl team took the field at Pasadena for the most glorious moment in Nebraska Football History up to that time.

While I as a fan couldn't care less if the Nebraska U. gridder is from Fairbanks, Alaska, or Sweetwater, Texas, there was one unusual thing about the Rose Bowl Team. Coach Biff Jones could have fielded a complete team from Lincoln. Here is the way it could have lined up and inasmuch as they played both ways in those days the team could have looked like this:

Ends — Bob Ludwick and Willard Bunker

Tackles — Vic Schleich and Forrest Behm.

Guards — Eddie Schwartzkopf and George Abel

Center — Fred Meier

Quarterback — Bus Knight

Running backs — Hermie Rohrig, Dale Bradley and Theos Thompson

Red-shirted — Fred Metheny, the brilliant quarterback from Lincoln High.

Lincoln's versatile Paul Amen was an assistant coach on that team.

Grand Island Standouts

While Grand Island couldn't quite match this team in numbers they still had a fine representation on the team.

Tackles — Clarence Herndon and Royal Kahler

Center — Howard Kelly

Running back — Bob Kahler

Assistant coach — Hubert Knickrehm, now a retired Third City insurance mogul, who had finished his playing days two years earlier and was also helping with the freshmen team during this season. I always felt that had Hub taken the coaching game seriously he could have been a mellow Vince Lombardi.



Mrs. Steve McWhirter, Mrs. Dan Lindstrom, "Wink", Mr. & Mrs. Robert Lindstrom of Oakland.

Ely a Great Husker

There have been many great centers at Nebraska. It is possibly the richest position in talent we've had down through the years. The first great center I read about as a boy on a farm was Lawrence Ely, the Grand Island All-American.

I cut his picture out of an old *Collier's* magazine where he had been named at center on Grantland Rice's All-American team. I looked at his picture and always thought how similar this handsome hero was to the movie actor, Clark Gable.



Lawrence Ely

The stories about Lawrence Ely enriched him to every boy my age. He was known as a man who terrorized opponents on Saturday but sang in the choir loft every Sunday. He was a man of great personal values. His life was a credit to athletics and held none of the disgrace that sometimes taints many modern athletes.

When I had the pleasure of meeting this great man many years later, I still felt that boyhood thrill that had charged through my body when I had seen his face in the old magazine. The occasion of our meeting was his induction into the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame. Just as handsome and courteous as ever, Lawrence traveled all the way from Alaska to receive this award.

Jeff Finn Day

One of the most dramatic events I have ever been associated with is the Jeff Finn Appreciation Day held in Lincoln last fall after the Kansas State game, at the American Legion Club.

I will always be very proud of the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce and the chairman of this committee, Barry Sandstrom, a former great athlete himself in his prep and college days, for the wonderful job they did in putting this affair on.

During the event the proud parents of Jeff, Dean and Donna Finn, were called on to say a few words about their wonderful son, and something happened to Dean that would certainly happen to me in a similar situation and I'm proud of it. He was overcome with emotion and he did the right thing to step down from the mike.

Everyone in the audience shared his feelings but the emotional reaction was shifting to the crowd. As master of ceremonies, I knew I had to get the crowd back in a festive mood so I had to search for a quick quip.

I made a split second search through the turn-away crowd, who came out to tell this wonderful young man, Jeff Finn,



Jeff Finn — outstanding young man.

thank you for putting our city on the map, in both athletics and school. I spotted my son, Chuck, sitting with Dan Arrasmith, who works with me on my radio show on KMMJ during the football season. I grabbed this chance to needle Chuck, who is certainly fair game at all times and remarked, "I respect a parent for feeling that way about his son, as when I look out in the audience tonight I see my son, Chuck. As a matter of fact, before he was born my wife and I were so happy. I wanted a boy and she wanted a girl and when he came along we both were satisfied."

And after the crowd quit laughing I added one more one-liner when I said, "Yes, every time I look at that kid, I wish to goodness they had retro-active birth control pills." Needless to say, the crowd was back in a happy mood.

The feelings of Dean Finn and the crowd were a fitting tribute to Jeff. I don't think I was ever so proud of a young man in my life as I was of this great young athlete. I constantly tell young athletes when I speak on the banquet circuit that Jeff stands for what hard work, dedication and the willingness to pay the price, really can do for you.

Paul Amen, Lincoln

One of the finest athletes ever produced in this state is Paul Amen, the former Husker ace in football, basketball and baseball, whose career spanned 1936 through 1939.

This wonderful man who is now the State Banking and Finance Director had a great coaching career after his great varsity career and these include stints at Nebraska, as an assistant, at West Point and Wake Forest. He then came back to Nebraska to enter the banking business. He is one of the most knowledgeable fans I know.

However, his most interesting story is about being on the 1936 Olympic Baseball Team. Many have asked me how a young athlete can be on the Olympic baseball squad when there is no such event on their sports agenda.

It was purely an experimental sport at the time and during this colorful period, Eleanor Holm, the famous swimmer, was suspended for drinking champagne on the boat taking them to Europe. The immortal Jesse Owens humbled Hitler and his supposed master race with his legendary feats, and a young U.S. distance runner climbed a flag pole in Berlin and took down the Nazi swastika and almost started World War II on the spot.

Paul Amen and his American teammates consisted of a bunch of college baseball players who were to play a series of intersquad games to try to show the world that the game of baseball could become an attractive Olympic event.

Amen loves to tell about the huge crowds, which in all probability post the all time record for size, for a baseball game. Many times in the large arena there were about 120,000 fans who couldn't believe the ability of the U.S. baseball players. The crowd would literally go wild when a routine fly ball was hit and an outfielder would make what they thought was a spectacular catch.

While Paul Amen has to be one of the finest men I have ever known, he certainly can say he pioneered Olympic baseball, and it is too bad the sport isn't in the Summer Olympics as the U.S. would have been almost certain Gold Medal winners in this sport.

The Team Player

I feel the winning spirit of Cornhusker football is reflected in what Dan Lindstrom, who graduated last fall, said to broadcaster Don Gill on a playback of the Big Red football films for educational television one evening.

The likeable defensive end from Oakland, who has now graduated, was asked by Gill if he ever had any regrets about playing second string for three years behind the likes of George Andrews, Lawrence Cole and Derrie Nelson. "No, I'm darned proud to be a part of this program and I'd do it all the same way," he replied.

Lindstrom proved that the brightest stars in Nebraska's football program sometimes shine in the shadows of others.

Rod Horn

Charlie McBride, the Nebraska defensive line coach, nearly breaks up when he tells this story.

In one of Rod Horn's last games as a senior in Memorial Stadium, he nearly picked off two enemy passes in one series of downs. In fact, he had both of them right in his mitts but couldn't hold them.

As the defensive unit came off the field and came over to the bench McBride heard a group of the players literally

screaming with laughter. Both Charlie and his cohort, defensive coordinator, Lance Van Zandt, had to find out what was so funny so they pushed their way through the crowd of players to see the likeable Horn putting some of the glue on his hands that pass receivers use. Unfortunately, those were the last passes Rod was able to even come close to that afternoon.

I jokingly asked McBride if he felt Horn would have held the next pass if one had come his way. He laughingly replied, "No, poor old Rod would have been so surprised he would have dropped dead right on the spot."

When I heard this story in the dressing room after the game, I joked with Rod, who is one of my favorite young men, about being moved to a split-end spot. He sadly replied, "Wink, a Dave Shamblin or a Tim Smith — I'm not!"

Ralph Powell

One of Mike Corgan's favorite jokes is one I tell about his former fullback, Ralph Powell from Detroit.

The handsome Michigan flash was a fine runner but was never known for his great hands. In fact, I remember the day Coach Corgan brought laughter from his players when he stopped a pass-catching drill and checked Ralph's hands to see if they were "screwed" on backwards.

One day Louie Swift, the Lincoln super-fan, and I were watching a workout. After "Rambling Ralph" had dropped about a dozen passes in a row it seemed Mike would just turn his head away each time as he couldn't stand the pain of seeing a perfect pass muffed.



Fans — Louis Swift, myself, Fred Cady and Dean Kratz — "Looks like 125 years off for good behavior."

On one bullet pass from a Nebraska quarterback, Powell made a perfect catch that would have made Skeeter Malito proud. My football buddy, Burt Newton, who has seen more Husker practices than the coaches, quipped, "My goodness, Mike, what happened — he finally caught one?"

The dejected Corgan never even turned around, and shaking his head rather sadly, but never losing his sense of humor replied, "I don't know — unless the darned sun got in his eyes."

Willie Ross

One of the most colorful characters of the Devaney era was Willie Ross. The former Arkansas prepster was always good for a story and admitted to me that he loved getting his share of the "ink."

One of Coach Corgan's favorite stories is about the time he went to Ross and told him, "Willie, due to the fact we have a lot of backfield talent, we won't be able to let you carry the ball so many times each Saturday."

Ross sadly replied, "Coach, I'll make a deal with you. If you let me carry the "pig" 10 times this coming Saturday I'll guarantee you I'll pick up 100 yards."

The happy Corgan almost swallowed his pipe as he replied, "Willie, we've got a deal."

The next Saturday the determined Ross, ripped and tore, churned and chugged for yardage like a man possessed, but he could only come up with 92 "big ones" in his 10 carries.

A dejected Corgan went to the likeable Ross and sadly remarked, "See what I mean, Willie. Heck, we put you on the honor system one time and you foul up."

In another game Willie wasn't blocking like Coach Corgan felt he should so he pulled him and put him on the bench.

Late in the game Willie eased up to the disgruntled Corgan and asked, "Coach, when am I going back in the game?"

Corgan snapped, "You ain't going back in cause you can't seem to block like you're supposed to".

Finally in the middle of the fourth quarter a humble Willie Ross took hold of Coach Corgan's arm and whispered in his ear and pleaded, "Coach, if you send me back in, I'm going to block like heck. As a matter of fact if they even call my number to carry the ball I'm going to refuse — as I'm going to tell that quarterback — Willie's just gonna block".

Each year Willie sends Mike Corgan a letter thanking him for what he did to help him grow up to be a fine citizen. The last time the likeable Husker backfield coach heard from him, he was in law enforcement work in the Virginia area.

David Liegel

This past fall when Dave Liegel, our fine punt return man, was slowed by an injured arch on his foot and his availability against Colorado was doubtful, it seemed Coach John Melton hit the ultimate in regard to the "Central City Cruiser's" value. The likeable Melton quipped, "Heck, he is so valuable we could carry him out on the field and let him fair catch the ball."

Kelvin Clark

Steve Glenn loves to tell the story about his old teammate, Kelvin Clark, in the 1978 56-10 rout of Hawaii in Lincoln.

In this game, the All-American Clark was lying on the sod at the bottom of a pile when a Hawaii player bit him. The easy-going Clark cautioned him by saying, "You know good teams don't do things like that." The frustrated Hawaiian replied, "I know — I'm not a good player and we ain't no good team."

Steve also loves to tell about a Nebraska defensive back who was being disciplined by a coach who assigned him to the "Alpine Climb," which is running to the top of the stadium and back by the steps. He was told to run the course three times.

The boy, not realizing the "Alpine Climb" is a round trip, asked, "Coach, can you possibly make it four times; that way I can come down."

Craig Johnson

Craig "The Leg" Johnson, the Omaha Westside star, had some fantastic days as a Husker with some of his greatest games coming against the Kansas teams, for some unknown reason.

"Big Steve" Angle, a great Nebraska fan, loves to tell this story about the handsome Craig, who against Kansas in 1978 ran for 192 yards besides catching a 78 yard TD pass from Tim Hager.

When Coach Osborne took him out of the game for a rest, the Nebraska fans gave him a tremendous standing ovation.

Good old, kind backfield mentor, Mike Corgan, said to

him, "Listen to that ovation, son, you're truly a hero."

"Ovation, my foot" panted Johnson, "It's a eulogy. They think I'm going to die."

Larry Young, Lincoln

Another great athlete who came to Nebraska from outstate and came back to the state to make his home is Larry Young, the rough and tough defensive specialist from New Jersey.

Larry, who is working for Wendy's in Lincoln, is a credit to the N.U. football program.

He agrees with me that he is happy to see the Huskers going into New Jersey, which has been such a fertile recruiting area in the past, to get such stars as Mike and Guy Rozier, Paul Miles and Stanley Wade. Of course in the past, New Jersey produced such stars as Rich Glover, Daryl White, Dodie Donnell, Tony Samuels and many others too numerous to mention.



Mike Rozier — Future superstar

Larry says his brother, Willie, who came to Nebraska as a highly sought All-American prep center, has gone into the service, and now is enrolled at South Carolina but is not playing football.

If any young man ever had any reservations about attending Nebraska and playing football, Larry Young is the fellow to talk to as he is one of the most enthusiastic boosters of our great program.

Todd Zart, Lincoln East

In all my days of following Nebraska football I can't think of a young man who commands more respect from me than Todd Zart, Lincoln East's former quarterback. After an injury in the Shrine Game a year ago, he gave the Husker football program a whirl as a walk-on, in spite of the fact the Husker freshmen roster listed two brilliant prospects, Turner Gill and Craig Sundberg.

Last fall in the frosh-red-shirt tussle Todd suffered a broken wrist in the early part of the season so was given a hardship year from the NCAA. Thus he has four years of eligibility left.

Before his first scrimmage this fall I visited with him briefly and told him how much respect I have for a young man like him. I always felt he had one of the fastest releases of any prep quarterback I've ever seen. In fact he did such a creditable job in the Huskers' first scrimmage that Coach Osborne called him up to the varsity to quarterback one of their units.

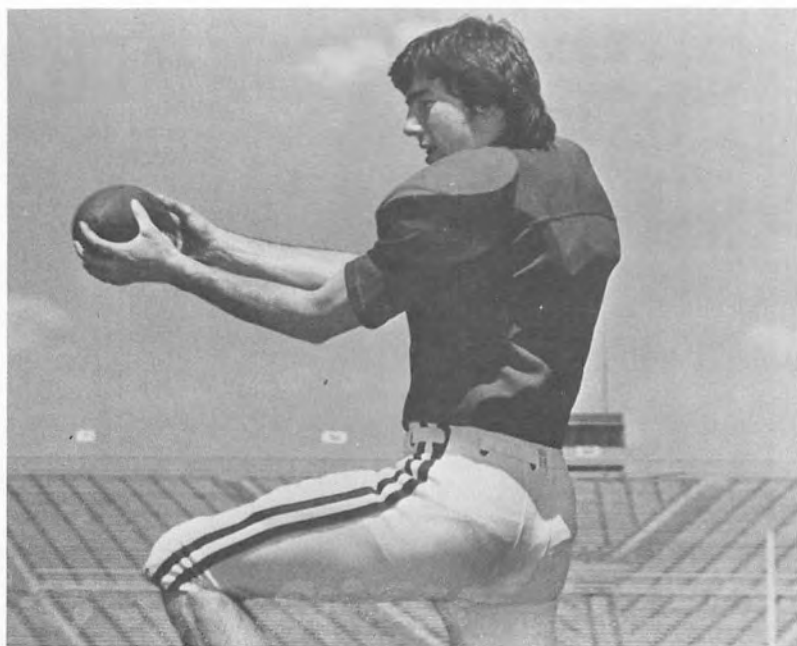
It is young men like Todd Zart, with that burning desire, that makes Nebraska football what it is today. And Todd is a young man I'd never bet against as he has a quality that makes him a winner.



Mike Mandelko



Coach Bob Thornton — Former Husker player



Dave Shamblin — One of our best ever

Chapter 28

Media

Don Gill — Radio Station KLIN

One of the finest men I know with any of the media is Don Gill, the KLIN radio announcer and Husker film commentator for educational television. The personable Gill is one of the fellows blessed with charisma and probably doesn't have an enemy in the profession.

The Californians for Nebraska love him, and I have attended many functions with this fine fellow involving this wonderful group.

A few years back, Gill was voted by the Omaha World-Herald as Nebraska's "Most Accurate" Sports caster. However, he jokes that he still turns red when he recalls one of the biggest radio goofs in Husker history.

One of the big plays in the Huskers' 1974 season occurred during the shellacking they gave Minnesota, a 67-yard punt return by Jimmy Burrow.

Gill's sidekick on the mike that year was Omaha TV announcer Lee Stevens who was covering the Husker football program for the first time. After the game, Stevens made a beeline for Burrow for his live, post-game locker room show. At least he thought it was Burrow he was interviewing. Listening upstairs in the booth, Gill knew immediately that Stevens had grabbed Terry Luck, instead of Burrow. Gill tried frantically to correct him, but there was no way to get through to the excited Stevens. When Stevens ecstatically started raving about the run, the fun-loving Terry Luck decided to play along. He assumed the roll of Burrow and told it all. Of course Luck being from North Carolina and Burrow from Mississippi, they both had the southern drawl.

Luck continued to tell how he made the run, and utilized his blockers (because he had watched from the sideline it was easy for him to play the part). Of course, Stevens didn't know about this mistaken identity for several days. Gill says it was terribly embarrassing, but still is was one of the best interviews Terry Luck ever gave at Nebraska.

Of course, Gill is one of the most modest fellows I know and admits he has never forgotten where he got his broadcasting

roots! In western Nebraska, it was not unusual to broadcast a game from a stepladder, haystack, or even a lightpole.

He admits his favorite vantage point was the library window at Hay Springs, the only place where you could see the whole field. Also, he loves to tell about the tin shed at Mullen where they grabbed shelter during a tremendous 30-minute hailstorm. He said his hearing has never been the same and vows he and his cohorts thought World War III had started.

Tim Moreland — Radio Station KFOR

Another one of the fine young sports commentators is Tim Moreland, the enthusiastic announcer for KFOR in Lincoln.

He tells a classic story that happened to him in his first season of doing the Husker play-by-play on the Cornhusker Network. It was in the second game of the season against California in 1978.

Tim said he was just getting used to working with his two colleagues, Dennis Claridge and Adrian Fiala, and things were going well until Rich Campbell, the California quarterback, threw an out pattern pass which went too high and out of bounds. Adrian, working the east sideline at Memorial Stadium and being an old linebacker, couldn't resist reaching up to catch the ball. But the speeding football caught his finger on the end and bent it back, severely spraining it. As soon as Adrian realized he needed to be off the mike for a while due to his injury, he informed Bill Callies, who monitors the sideline on an off-the-air cue system. Fiala said, "Bill, I caught Campbell's pass and broke my finger. I'll be off for a while."

"Wild Bill" Callies, as I fondly know him, thought Adrian was kidding and said nothing about it to Moreland in their booth in the pressbox.

A couple plays later, Tim called to the sidelines for Adrian who was being checked out by a doctor and was cradling the mike under one arm. Two questions were directed to Adrian at the same time. Someone passing by him on the sidelines asked, "What happened, Adrian?" On the air Moreland was inquiring, "Adrian, on that play, who was responsible for the lead block?"

The timing was perfect. He answered the guy on the sideline by saying: "Oh, I don't know, _____ it!" His voice was carried on the air. The engineer, hearing Moreland's question to Adrian, had opened his mike for his response. He got it alright,

but good! Tim gulped and went on with the play-by-play wondering what he did to make Fiala so mad!

To this day they laugh about this escapade, but at that time it certainly wasn't funny for the flamboyant Moreland, who this past year was named the Nebraska Sportscaster of the Year. He's one guy that really breathes enthusiasm!

Randy York — Lincoln Journal and Star.

One of the funniest columns ever written by Randy York, the personable writer of the Lincoln Journal and Star, is the story he relates from the Reader's Digest about the football widow who tried to make a point with her fanatical football husband, by climbing up on the TV and screaming, "Play me — or trade me!"

The fun-loving Randy also struck pay dirt on my funny bone when he shared his quote of the week from Lynn Norenberg, a player on the William and Mary women's basketball team.

She wasn't the least bit frightened by the prospect of playing unbeaten national power, Old Dominion. "They're no different from us," she clicked. "They put on their bras just like we do".

Virgil Parker — Lincoln Journal and Star

Virgil Parker, the handsome Lincoln Journal and Star sports editor, tells one of the most unusual stories I've ever heard about covering his first prep football game in Nebraska. After coming to Lincoln from Oregon, he was assigned to the paper's prep desk.

It also was the first high school game the lovely Ginny, later to be his wife, ever saw out of the city of Lincoln. Ginny, well known to the Channel 10 & 11 TV fans, sang on the former Wayne West Show after gaining national prominence on the Arthur Godfrey Show. I will always call this lovely lady "The Phyllis George of Nebraska."

The game that Parker was supposed to cover was between Shickley and Lawrence. The unusual thing about the contest, however, is the fact that one team played eight-man football and the other 11-man. A strange agreement between the two schools was struck. Since defensive adjustments are easier to make, the coaches decided that the team that had the ball

would put its standard number of players on the field. Throughout the game, the number of players on the field rotated. First each side would play 11. Then each side would play eight.

Strange as this game was for the fans to comprehend, Ginny also had another thing puzzling her.

As they were driving into Shickley, Ginny kept saying, "I can't see the stadium. How come I can only see the lights, and where is the large stadium?"

I rate "Versatile Virgil" as one of the finest sports writers in the state and he certainly admits after this, he has seen it all.

Bremser & Blackwell

One of the funniest true stories occurred while I was listening to the Nebraska-Hawaii game played at Honolulu in 1971.

My family and I didn't go to this game because we were trying to leave for the "second shootout of the year" with Alabama in the Orange Bowl, for a combination football trip and vacation.

As I was listening to the game at approximately 2 or 3 A.M. (CST), I kept switching from Dick Perry, to Joe Patrick and to Lyell Bremser, because I feel they are all fine announcers. Finally in the fourth quarter of a game the Huskers won 45-3, and with my eyelids drooping, I was fighting the fact I was about ready to drop off to sleep.

At this particular moment, I was tuned into KFAB with Bremser and his side-kick and color man, Dave Blackwell, now the pride of Salt Lake City. The game was being played in the old stadium in Hawaii and according to the announcers' description of the old Honolulu field, it was dimly lit and to get into the press box you almost had to be a member of some trapeze troupe.

Late in the fourth quarter, Lyell said he thought he saw a flag thrown in the far corner of the dim lit field, but after closer observation he admitted it might be just a piece of paper or a handkerchief that had blown out on the gridiron. After some close scrutiny with his color man, "Desperate Dave," the pair made a rather careful analysis of the situation which would have made Howard Cosell and his sidekick "Dandy Don" Meredith look like pikers.

They both decided it looked like an impending clipping penalty was going to be stepped off against the Huskers.

Finally Bremser commented, "I don't see how that could be called a clipping penalty, as there wasn't a Nebraska player in that whole area."

The crafty Blackwell broke me up when he replied, "Well, the officials probably felt that if a Nebraska man had been there, he would have clipped."

After this gem by the flamboyant Blackwell I literally woke my wife up with my laughing and from there on out, "It was certainly no laughing matter."

Dick Janda — KOLN-TV & KGIN-TV

Dick Janda of TV stations KOLN & KGIN is one of the finest and most conscientious young sports announcers in the business.

He says one of the funniest moments of his young TV career, one that he will remember all his life, took place on the eve of the 1980 Oklahoma-Nebraska football game.

From a fan or listener standpoint it had to be one of the most talked about programs in history, but unfortunately I was out of the area speaking at a meeting so I missed it.

Dick recalls that Coach Barry Switzer of the Sooners was using the Channel 10 studios in Lincoln to relay a TV program back to Oklahoma City earlier in the evening. When Janda politely asked the Oklahoma coach if he wanted to be a guest on the Bob Devaney Show, which comes on at 10:30 each Friday night, Barry declined, saying he felt he had a pretty full schedule for the evening.

On the Devaney Show that evening, the Nebraska Athletic Director had a friend of his from Hawaii, Ray Hong, who owns a chain of restaurants on the Island, as his guest. Mr. Hong had seen only two Oklahoma-Nebraska football games, the famous 1971 "Shoot-out" and the Husker victory in 1978 so Devaney thought maybe he was sort of a good luck charm that could help turn the Sooner jinx around.

During the Devaney Show, Mr. Hong was presenting Bob with a pineapple from Hawaii which he felt might serve as sort of a good luck charm for the Huskers. However, right during this exchange the unpredictable Switzer walked out from behind a curtain and presented Devaney with a sack of tacos. Of course the whole midwest TV audience knew that the tacos

signified the trip to the Sun Bowl in El Paso, where the loser of this contest was apparently going, with the winner heading for sunny Miami and the Orange Bowl.

The N.U. athletic director, Devaney is not one to be caught off guard, but in this case, he apparently was surprised. However, I rate Bob one of the best ad-libbers in the business and my only regret is the fact I didn't get to see the show.

Janda said that lots of viewers felt this event was planned, but he assured me it was not and he was just as surprised as anyone.

Dave Sittler, Omaha World-Herald

Another of the fine sports writers in the state is Dave Sittler of the Omaha World-Herald.

"Desperate Dave," as he was known in his prep days at Hebron, recently returned from a business venture in Australia.

This past summer when I was telling him that I felt maybe I'm a jinx to the Huskers when they play Oklahoma, he came up with this brilliant idea.

Sittler confesses he missed the last Husker victory over the Sooners when we beat them in 1978. He was in Sydney and didn't get to see the game. (Sydney, Australia that is.)

This coming fall he says he plans on spending the day in Sidney (Nebraska that is) to try to bring the Huskers luck.

Dave, you're my kind of a guy!

Wally Provost, Omaha World-Herald

One of my all time favorite human beings has to be Wally Provost, the suave Omaha World-Herald sports writer.

I believe Wally is right when he says the worst sign or banner put up at any televised bowl game last year was the one at the Sun Bowl in El Paso when the Huskers beat Mississippi State 31-17.

It said: "The Ayatollah Is a Cornhusker."

Any guy that would put up a sign like that has to be the type of person that would go to see the movie "Jaws" and root for the shark.

Tom Ash, Lincoln

Tom Ash, the former Omaha World-Herald scribe, is one of the finest sports writers the state has ever had.

I don't think I ever met a chap with more on the ball or who carried more respect of the players, coaches and fans. I asked him one day what he thought about all this Big Red Spirit that literally puts the whole state in orbit each autumn.

He replied, "Let's put it this way, Wink. When my baby boy was born the first thing I bought him was a pair of Big Red booties with cleats."

Larry Porter, Omaha World-Herald

Another of the great sports writers in this state is the handsome Larry Porter, the pride of the World-Herald.

He does an excellent job of covering high school athletics in the state and often finds himself the sounding board for many of the various prep coaches over the area as "Larruping Larry," is a fellow in the know.

One story he likes to tell is about the high school mentor who was crying the blues over his quarterback. He told Larry, "I just can't figure this kid out — he can pass like another Vince Ferragamo and run like Nate Mason, and he has a football mind that won't quit. As a matter of fact, he oozes football knowledge from the time he gets out of bed in the morning until he gets into the huddle — then his brain goes completely blank!"

Steve Anderson, KHAS-TV

One of the outstanding young TV personalities in the midwest is Steve Anderson of KHAS-TV in Hastings.

He jokingly tells about being out in the area interviewing various high school coaches for his two evening telecasts. One coach was actually beside himself after an intersquad scrimmage turned out to be a nightmare.

The frenzied mentor was telling handsome Steve, "Why, that dumb quarterback of mine is supposed to have a shot-gun arm and tonight he threw nine straight passes and didn't even come close to a receiver. Finally, I told the lad that if it wasn't for the law of gravity, he couldn't even hit the ground."

Ken Pavelka, KFAB

Ken Pavelka of KFAB and one of the most capable basketball play-by-play announcers I know, shakes his head as he tells about his darkest moment in broadcasting.



Ken Pavelka and I — “Lookout Barry Switzer!”

The Iowa State Cyclones were playing basketball in Lincoln and the flamboyant Ken was ad-libbing the pre-game show. He wrapped up the show by saying, “The Iowa State Cyclones come in here tonight with a new head coach, Ken Trickey, who had great success at Oral Roberts, where he guided his team to the Midwest NCAA Regionals. Trickey takes over for the late Maury John, who died and couldn’t be here tonight.”

**Tom Hedrick, Former Sportscaster at Channel 10 & 11,
now the voice of the Jawhawks in Lawrence, Kansas**

One of my favorite sports announcers was Tom Hedrick, the former sportscaster at Channel 10 & 11 in Lincoln.

I always break up when I think of the time he was interviewing a fine defensive end at N.U. The chap was a brilliant athlete but wasn’t gifted with the words. The Huskers were going to be facing their first option quarterback of the season the next Saturday and “The Parrot,” as Tom was fondly known, because he could out-talk Howard Cosell on any given day, was all excited about the game. He asked this defensive star how he was going to defend the option.

The fellow was unable to put into words just what Nebraska’s “battle plan” was. So Tom, being the sort of a fellow who, if someone asked him what time it was, would tell them how to build a watch, tried to help him.

Hedrick, with his adrenaline flowing a mile a second, asked, "Well, are you going to try to cover the pitch man, or are you going to go right for the quarterback, or are you going to try to read the blocking keys?"

As Tom stuck the mike over in the defensive end's face for an answer, the poor player made an effort as he frantically searched for the proper words and stammered, "Well, what we'll probably do . . . is . . . to . . ." Then there was a long pause and the poor player looked like he was going to either laugh or cry before mumbling, "... I ... don't understand the question!"

Hedrick's Funniest Moment

The "Voice of the Jayhawks" says one of the funniest things he has ever seen while following the Huskers was when Monte Kiffin was giving a scouting report on the coming Kansas U. football game. The Jayhawks had a very unimpressive 0-3 record and Monte was trying to give an honest appraisal of the game but still didn't want the players to take the team lightly.

As Monte was giving his speech he said, "Now, I don't want to be facetious . . ."

Coach Devaney interrupted and broke up the whole meeting when he said, "Can you spell it?" As the whole room was laughing poor Monte tried desperately to write it on the blackboard and, of course, couldn't. Every guy in the room was trying to help him but no one got it right. And come to think of it, as I'm writing this, I can't spell it either.

Chuck Strand, Fremont

One of the most promising young radio announcers in this state is Chuck Strand of Fremont. He is a great play-by-play man and has personality plus.

He told this story on the air this past summer when our good friend, Vince Ferragamo, the former N.U. quarterback, signed a juicy contract with the Montreal Allouettes.

Chuck stunned his audience with this little cutie, "Vince will become so rich if he signs this fabulous contract that he'll have an unlisted number on his jersey."

Pete Letheby, Grand Island Independent Sports Writer

Pete Letheby, sports editor of the Grand Island Independent, is the handsome son of Fred Letheby, the longtime

basketball coach at Madison.

Pete breaks up when he tells this story about a friend of his who was a golf nut.

One day the friend was out on the golf links about ready to tee off on the first hole when a beautiful girl came running up to him in a gorgeous bridal outfit. The golfer frantically waved her aside and said, "Susie, you know what I told you — only if it rains."

Brian Gallagher, Radio Station, KRGI, Grand Island

When Brian Gallagher, the handsome radio announcer from Wisconsin, came to Nebraska to continue his radio career, he was assigned to do some of the play-by-play of a Grand Island High School game for KRGI in the Third City.

On one play Tom Rathman, the Third City All-State fullback and now a Husker frosh star, was called on to carry the ball from the six-inch line.

Of course the dependable Rathman scored with ease.

The colorful Gallagher, who someday will probably be working some of the Milwaukee games with his idol, the immortal Bob Uecker, screamed into the mike, "Rathman scores on an electrifying six-inch run."

Jerry Shottenkirk, the Grand Island Independent sports writer who was covering the game in the next booth, calmly asked Brian, "How in the world do you make a six-inch run?"

The excited but calm Gallagher replied, "Well, 'Big Tom' broke into the clear and they just couldn't catch him."

Joe diNatale, North Platte

Still one of the best ever in the radio field is Joe diNatale, the golden voice of the Nebraska air-waves. When he announces the state track meet there is no one in the world who can match Joe's, "His time was 10 seconds . . . e-v-e-n!"

Joe, who does public relations work for my good friend, York Hinman at the Holiday Inn in North Platte, was having coffee with some tourists staying at the motel, when the question came up, "How many sports do you have at Nebraska U.?"

The quick witted diNatale answered, "Two."

They questioned his statement and again asked, "Only two — what are they?"

Joe calmly answered, "Football and spring football."

Joe, you are my kind of fan.

Bill Brennan, Grand Island Independent

"The Frame Up"

This story always draws a chuckle out of my good friend, Bill Brennan, former Third City sports writer and now city editor of the Independent, and who counseled me during the writing of this book.

In 1972, when the last Devaney-coached team went back to West Point to play an outmanned Army team and beat them 77 to 7, some eastern sports writer asked their head coach, Tom Cahill, what he thought of the game.

Poor Coach Cahill sadly shook his head and replied, "I sort of know how General Custer felt at the Little Big Horn, but at least he didn't have to look at the film."

"Skip" Morris

When Robert E. "Skip" Morris, Executive Director of the Nebraska Coaches Association, was visiting New York City in the summer of 1971, he got on a bus in Greenwich Village.

While seated, he noticed what can only be described as a "hippie" either half asleep or stoned. Skip was wearing a windbreaker with a small "Go Big Red" insignia on it. The hippie got Morris' attention and asked where he was from. Upon learning that Skip was from Nebraska, the hippie asked how the Huskers were going to be that fall. Morris advised the hippie to bet the farm on them every week. They continued to talk about Husker football until Skip had to leave the bus near the Empire State Building.

Robert says he never learned the guy's name or what his ties to Nebraska were, but he has often wondered if the hippie took his advice and bet on what proved to be the finest football team in college football history!

Gary Drown, Radio Station KOLT, Scottsbluff

Gary Drown, western Nebraska's answer to Johnny Carson and a fellow that many fans refer to as the "Panhandle's

Howard Cosell," has a tremendous listening audience on Radio Station KOLT in Scottsbluff.

A few years back, this raconteur had some fun in his listening area, reporting the folks in the Nebraska panhandle were going to have a secession from the state to join Wyoming.

The first day or so the radio station got a call from what was obviously a Wyoming resident saying, "You can't come to Wyoming unless we get Coach Bob Devaney back."

I will never forget going to the Scottsbluff area a couple of years ago to speak at their festive Elks Day Celebration. This character got on the radio and jokingly told all the families in town to lock up their booze and for all women to stay indoors. It was real exciting having a police escort every place I went — (right behind me, of course).



Kelvin Clark — "One of our greatest!"

Chapter 29

What is the Big Red's Future?

Winning football games at Nebraska is so commonplace that I doubt most fans realize what a phenomenon has taken place in our state. No other college football team in the nation has been such a successful underdog in the last 20 years. In fact, the only other schools in such sparsely-populated states to reach such gridiron achievements are Oklahoma and Alabama. Oklahoma's recruiting successes, built in the days of Bud Wilkinson, have depended on raids in the fertile state of Texas for great athletes. Usually a high number of the players on a Sooner football team are from the Lone Star State. Alabama's recruiting achievements have a similar story, dating back to the arrival of the immortal Paul "Bear" Bryant on the Tuscaloosa Campus. He turned Alabama into the football Mecca of the southeast and every talented southern boy grows up wanting to play for the Bear. Just as Oklahoma relies on Texas for a steady stream of talented gridders, the Crimson Tide counts on the best athletes in an immediate four-to-five state area.

Other successful colleges also have a home ground for their recruiting program. Southern California, U.C.L.A. and sometimes Stanford dominate the West Coast. Pittsburgh and powerhouse Penn State rely on the entire northeast to stock their programs. Michigan and Ohio State have large metropolitan areas in their own states. Even with the raids from Oklahoma there is enough talent in the Lone Star State to supply Texas and support several other major colleges. Notre Dame, once relying mostly on the loyalty of the many great Catholic boosters that it has in our land, is now so rich in football tradition that athletes everywhere want to play for the Fighting Irish. South Bend also is geographically close to many metropolitan areas such as talent-laden Chicago.

One of the other things that has helped Notre Dame in the past has been the fact that most parts of the nation carry films of the Fighting Irish games. This is a very good recruiting gimmick and many coaches have told me that when it came down to the final decision as whether to go to Notre Dame or some other school, being able to see films of the games each week made the difference. This advantage could be alleviated

with Husker telecasts going into some of the top recruiting areas with weekly films on various cable networks from New Jersey to California. At this writing, the Big Red films will be spreading Cornhusker gospel into 11 states this fall. This should be only the beginning as the "Barry Switzer Show" goes into 23 states and the Husker recruiting coordinator Jerry Pettibone is completely sold on this project.

While Nebraska is not very densely populated, it also isn't located near a heavily-populated state. It's just as unusual for Nebraska to be able to put together a great football team as it would be for New Mexico, Wyoming, North Dakota or Nevada to have a perennial gridiron winner. Nebraska isn't blessed with beautiful mountains with popular ski lodges, and the state doesn't have the beaches and many other features that give other schools advantages. So the Husker coaches must search everywhere for athletes and sell them on one of the finest football programs in the nation.

I disagree with some of the national recruiting services in the nation who apparently feel we play a very sub-par variety of football in the state of Nebraska. Joe Terranova's summary of last year's recruits didn't list the Huskers as getting one of the top 60 gridders in America. Terranova is recognized by many as the top authority on prep football stars in the nation.

The Athlon's annual Nebraska and Big Eight Football edition, published this past summer, has a column by Dr. Charley Holland which listed the top 100 phenoms and the colleges where they were going to enroll. Here again, Nebraska failed to land one of these boys. Dr. Holland is a computer expert in the nuclear industry and admits his main claim to fame was in predicting that Herschel Walker, the Georgia star, was the best product in the nation a year ago. Of course, this prediction was about as startling a statement as Johnny Carson telling the world that Brooke Shields wasn't going to be an old maid.

The point is, there are some outstanding prepsters with the good old "Big Red" spirit running pretty deep in their blood, here in the state of Nebraska. From a year ago, some of the stars of the 1980 frosh team — Bill Weber, Craig Sundberg, Bret "The Jet" Clark, Mark Traynowicz, Harry Grimminger, Scott Porter and other devout Cornhuskers-made up their minds long ago that they wanted to be a part of the greatest football program in the nation. This is why out-of-state teams don't

waste their time in recruiting them, giving the recruiting authorities an unrealistic picture.

This year's (1981) freshman team is spearheaded by native Nebraskans John White, Jim Skow, Tom Rathman, Todd Fisher, Dan Wingard, John Hayes, Kevin Cole, Shane Swanson and many others who just wouldn't even consider matriculating elsewhere. Nebraska is where their heart is, and it's young men like this that make Big Red a religion.

OUR WALK-ON PROGRAM

The true picture of Nebraska's football strength comes from the young men who walk-on and have made up their minds they are going to be part of N.U.'s fabulous football program at all costs. Young men such as Dan McCoy, Scott Strasburger, Shane Thorell, Sam Hudson, Jack Jeffries, Roger Lindstrom and dozens of other Nebraskans form the nucleus of this year's great team. Their spirit is absolutely insurmountable.

Recently I picked out an outstanding young man who is going to walk on at N.U. this fall and asked him to give me the reason he chose to do this instead of perhaps get a chance to play sooner at a smaller college. This is the letter I received.

"Being a walk-on at the University of Nebraska is quite a privilege. Not everyone gets the chance to play for such a great program, a great tradition and a great coach. Nebraska has shown through the years that walk-ons have just as good of a chance to play football for them as do their scholarship players. It is a good feeling to know that if you go there and work hard and have the right attitude, that someday you may have the chance to play for the University of Nebraska. Walking on at the University is well worth the sacrifice of playing four years at a small college when you know that someday you have the chance to be a part of Big Red Football."

Shane Thorell — Seward, Ne.



Shane Thorell

Other schools have programs for walk-on athletes but nobody succeeds like Nebraska. Pro scouts who visit the Husker winter conditioning drills and the spring practices walk away amazed at the number of players who try to make the Husker football team. No player is ever turned away without receiving a fair chance. In fact, the walk-on program has become so large that Coach Osborne has had to limit the number of players that can be taken.

It isn't fair to the other athletes to have some young men try out who really had no potential at all. Each year, there are eight or ten future Nebraska stars who emerge from this group of players who failed to impress those computers when they were fed all that statistical information. Of course in Nebraska's case it is the eagle eye of the coaches who are so uncanny in seeing something in a boy that the Huskers can use. Some of the all-time famous walk-ons are I.M. Hipp, Jimmy and Toby Williams, Derrie Nelson and Andy Means.

I truly respect a coach like Tom Osborne who holds back four or five scholarships for these young men, who have worked their way up through the ranks. It is certainly an incentive to these fine athletes.

When someone says Nebraska doesn't play a great brand of high school football, I always remind them that we produced two super-stars from Omaha, Gale Sayers and Johnny Rodgers, in a little over a decade. Many young men with high discipline and an undaunted spirit have been the nucleus for many great Husker football teams. Yes what Nebraska produces in quality, it is unable to provide in numbers. To build a roster of more than 100 players, to build a national contender, Nebraska coaches must compete head-to-head with every major college in the country to attract players.

One of the things lots of fans forget about is the fact that Nebraska doesn't have a large Black population where so many fine athletes, especially the great speciality people, come from. I heard one of the finest coaches in America say this at a meeting a couple of years ago and it certainly is "food for thought."

NCAA Rules Difficult

This job of recruiting became even more difficult when the NCAA decided to place stricter limitations on recruiting. Nebraska, once armed with the 45 scholarships available to all teams, was well equipped. When the limit was cut back to 30, it

eliminated the margin for error in recruiting. A team in a scarcely populated area such as Nebraska is likely to be hurt more. The cutback in visits each coach can make, the number of visits a player can make to a campus and in the number of coaches that can work with the recruiting have made the task very difficult.

Many say that the rules work the same with every school. A player, however, is much more likely to attend a school where he grew up because outsiders can no longer compete with the local influence cast on a football player. Today's NCAA rules are protecting such schools as Texas, Southern California and Ohio State and at the same time producing new football powers as Mississippi State, Baylor and Florida State.

Larry Donavon, a former Husker gridder and prep pole vault champion from Scottsbluff, now the head football coach at the University of Montana, once told me he heard John McKay speak when he was the head coach at U.S.C. He recalled Coach McKay saying they had approximately 150 blue chip athletes within driving distance of the Los Angeles campus including top junior college grads, while in Nebraska we have approximately 10 to 12 blue chippers each year and no junior colleges playing football. This is a definite handicap.

However, all is not lost. Nebraska is a major football power, rich in tradition. The Lincoln campus offers the finest in a coaching staff and facilities. The winning tradition, the bowl games and the enthusiastic support of great fans are all important reasons why the successes at Nebraska won't crash overnight. Also, we must never forget the wholesomeness of the good old midwest where being friendly is just a way of life.

I truly feel that if Nebraska football fortunes were to falter, it would be a process of erosion, not the thunderous crash that followed Nebraska's only Rose Bowl team in the early 1940's. Right now, one man — Tom Osborne — tirelessly works to keep this from happening. He does it with a tremendous coaching staff and the great system built and passed on by Bob Devaney. Right now he is working with a veteran, personable staff who put a boy's education and general welfare above winning.

With all the great men around him, however, Osborne is the one who draws athletes to Nebraska. He visits the home of every Husker prospect and there is no doubt that this straight-shooting, handsome redhead leaves the families and

players well impressed about the quality of life at Nebraska for students and athletes. I will never forget what he said about his players when he turned down an attractive offer from Colorado a couple years back, "I have recruited these young men and I promised them I was going to be their coach. I intend to live up to my part of the bargain."

I can't think of anything that would be more frustrating to a young athlete, than to wonder who the next head coach will be, and to ponder what the new coaching staff will demand of him.

The personable Osborne doesn't succeed with every recruiting effort, and there are many reasons athletes choose to enroll at a certain school. Also, it's true that athletes everywhere are misled by promises that schools can't deliver and that Nebraska recruiters refuse to make, such as telling a boy he will play as a freshman. I have known dozens and dozens of Husker athletes during the past few years and some have confided in me what other ivory hunters have promised. In many cases the boy was even embarrassed; the promises other recruiters made were an insult to his intelligence.

Some parents have told me confidentially that they found it difficult to believe there was a coaching staff as straightforward as the Huskers, in this complicated and sometimes deceptive world of college football.

I have said publicly at many banquets, that I personally feel the Huskers would have been national champions in three or four of the past eight years if they had had a big play man in the lineup with the intangible qualities of a Johnny Rodgers, keeping continuous pressure on opposing teams with his electrifying punt returns and spectacular catches. Ask any Pittsburgh Steeler fan what they would have done without the spectacular catches of one Lynn Swann in their various runs for the championship. Many times he kept drives going with almost unbelievable circus catches.

OSBORNE'S MEN

Behind the coaching spirit of Coach Osborne at Nebraska is a contingency of coaching genius that is able to maximize the talent of youths who travel to Lincoln. My good friend, the brilliant pro quarterback Vince Ferragamo, credits the Nebraska coaching staff for preparing him so well for his career, which is just beginning to take shape. At this writing he is having his

problems in the Canadian League, but I know this young man will get it all together in a year or two.

I truly believe the Husker coaching staff can outcoach others. Take the indomitable Clete Fischer and his sidekick "Marvelous Milt" Tenopir, the fine offensive line coaches of Nebraska. I will never forget how they took an unheralded lineman, Dan Steiner, and an injury-plagued Mark Goodspeed and worked with them tirelessly in preparation for the 1979 game against Penn State. As a result, the two Husker tackles used technique blocking to completely man-handle Bruce Clark and Matt Millen, their All-American defensive tackles who were reputed to be capable of pressing more than 500 pounds.



Coach Milt Tenopir — Great recruiter

On the day of his inauguration into the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame, athletic director Bob Devaney noted that such talented players as John Dutton, Jeff Kinney, Rik Bonness and others always made him and his coaching staff much smarter. But coaches like Devaney and Osborne and their fine assistants, past and present, have made such players much better.

When Coach Osborne entered the difficult task of following Devaney, the old coaching gang included John Melton, Mike

Corgan and Clete Fischer, still with the Huskers today, and such people as Monte Kiffin, Warren Powers, George Kelly, Carl Selmer and Jim Walden, who have gone on to other coaching jobs in college football. All but Kelly have become head mentors. Jim Ross, the great Devaney assistant and freshman coach, stayed on and is now an assistant athletic director and in charge of the Devaney Sports Complex. These assistants helped develop another tremendous weapon to combat the mounting odds against Nebraska in college football for the 1980's. — the walk-on program.

FRESHMAN PROGRAM GREAT

The thing that I feel speaks for our football system the most is the freshman program which is one of the best in the nation. Most schools are hard pressed to field a freshman football team, and most have to play junior varsity players to be able to put a representative team on the field. Meanwhile, the Huskers have to screen the candidates so they don't have too many. This is a wonderful spot to be in.

While freshman football programs are faltering at other major colleges, the tradition remains strong at Nebraska. I truly feel one of the reasons the Huskers are successful is the fact they don't take yearlings and use them as "cannon-fodder" for the varsity. The Huskers use red-shirts and other varsity reserves who run enemy plays. The frosh gridder may be having all the problems he wants getting adjusted to college life and the classroom chores without being subjected to the punishment of scrimmaging a fired up varsity eleven trying to sharpen their fangs for a crucial game.

HUSKER STAFF

One of the greatest compliments to our staff occurred when the great Jarvis Redwine spotted coach Gene Huey on the sidelines during a Nebraska TV appearance, after he had met the Huskers' likeable tight end and wingback coach while he was at the University of New Mexico. Jarvis said that Huey was the kind of guy he wanted to be associated with. Thus, the contact was made by the speedy Redwine and the rest is history as he went on to become an All-American. I personally rate Huey one of the fine young coaches on the college scene today. Recently when I was speaking in Cheyenne, Wyo., I found they think the world of this former Uniontown, Pa., flash in that state.



Coach Gene Huey — “A man’s man.”

When Tom Osborne took over the Nebraska reins he continued to add this kind of coach to his staff. He brought in Jerry Moore from S.M.U., a chap that stood for integrity and was a valuable recruiter. Moore contributed much to Nebraska’s success before taking a head coaching job in Texas. He is now at Texas Tech and recently on another speaking engagement in Texas, I ran into several fine alumni from that school and they swear that the likeable Moore will lead them out of the wilderness, a la Bob Devaney and Tom Osborne.

Osborne used excellent judgment in landing Bill Myles, a very successful prep coach from Kansas City who only had one “flaw” — he was a died-in-the-wool Woody Hayes fan. He read everything that the fiery former Buckeye mentor ever wrote on football and when a chance came to join the legendary Hayes, he grabbed it.

George Darlington, the Charleston, W. Va., charmer, is another instrumental aide that Tom brought in to keep the Husker program on the upgrade. The handsome Darlington has had some fine recruiting success in California; he was at San Jose State for four years before answering the Husker call. As a defensive end coach, he developed such stars as Bob Martin, Ray Phillips, George Andrews, Lawrence Cole, Tony Samuels, Derrie Nelson and now the All-American candidate Jimmy Williams.

When defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin left Nebraska, coach Osborne brought Lance Van Zandt to the Lincoln campus. Van Zandt, who had itchy feet and a history of moving around more than a legendary Texas gunslinger, only stays three or four years at each school, so this year he departed from the Husker camp to join his old friend, Coach Bum Phillips with the New Orleans Saints. Van Zandt was an excellent recruiter, particularly in Texas, where he spoke their language. The wonderful Gill family of Forth Worth admit he was very instrumental, as was John Sanders, our baseball coach, in recruiting Turner Gill, Jr.

Charlie McBride joined Osborne's staff after some fine



Turner Gill

years at Wisconsin. He also is a top recruiter and inasmuch as he formerly worked under the stern taskmaster Frank Kush at Arizona State before his stint at Wisconsin, he gives the air of having a tough surface. Underneath, though, "Cheerful Charlie" is one of my favorite people. Any time I want to get this chap's attention I always tell him sort of confidentially that I have located an outstanding middle-guard who is only 5 feet 2 inches tall but is a real submariner. Also while the guy is little he makes up for it by being slow! The likeable former Colorado U. football star always asks, "Wink, why couldn't you be like other fellows — follow the ballet?"

Milt Tenopir, who works hand-and-glove with Cletus Fischer, came to Nebraska from the Colorado prep ranks where he has valuable ties. As a recruiter in that area he has few peers, since he is well-liked and respected by all the coaches who know him. This former Harvard, Ne., flash is definite head coaching material.

Bob Thornton is another newcomer to the staff who now works with the secondary. A former junior college grad with a great knowledge of the game, he is well respected by the players as they know he has been there himself.

Frank Solich, a tough little former Husker fullback, lettered in both football and baseball before becoming one of the most successful prep coaches the state ever produced. This young man carries the respect of all who know him, both on and off the field and could definitely be head coach at some major college in the future, including Nebraska.

Osborne brought Jerry Pettibone in to fill the very important post of recruiting coordinator, a post he filled very ably on the Sooner staff. This well-organized young man has many valuable contacts in the southwest which has been the happy hunting ground for the Oklahoma staff for years.

Other top-flight N.U. assistant coaches are Jack Pierce, the handsome Alabaman, who brought Andra Franklin to Nebraska, Jeff Carpenter, the former Husker linebacker and co-captain, Tony Samuels, the former standout defensive end and Lawrence "Spade" Cooley, who does such an outstanding job with the frosh offensive line.

These young coaches are great additions to such veterans as John Melton, whom I rate the best recruiter in college circles, and Mike Corgan, who has few peers as a blocking coach. These men just ooze football knowledge.

Of course, one of the most important parts of the Husker program is its weight program headed by the redoubtable Boyd Epley and his able sidekick "Marvelous Mike" Arthur. An example of what this department can do is evident in the case of this year's starting guard, Tom Carlstrom, who came in from Polk as a freshman weighing 230 pounds, bench-pressing 185 pounds and running a :05.3 forty yard dash. Four years later, he has made remarkable improvement, weighing 275 pounds, benching 375 pounds and running a :04.9 forty yards. This phenomenal advancement shows that the Husker weight program is one of the very top ones in the nation — if not the best.



Tom Carlstrom

Ursula Walsh is so much a part of the system that it would be criminal not to mention her in conjunction with the whole program, as she has added so much to the academic side of Nebraska athletics. She now has an assistant in Jann Steel, so it is very apparent that the Huskers are going to continue having more and more players on the All-Academic Teams.

In all, it's a wonderful mix of coaching. There are the time-tested veterans of the Devaney years, the proven imports from other football programs and the new blood that Osborne has spotted in a player or high school coach. Because these men are so talented, Nebraska will continue to lose some of them to other football programs in the nation that are looking for the magic that works so well in Big Red Country. Fans often forget, it is just as important for Coach Osborne to continually replenish his coaching talent at Nebraska as it is to find new player talent.

HUSKER OFFENSE VERY EFFECTIVE

Bringing top players and coaches to Nebraska is just the beginning in the successful program. Once they are gathered, the head coach must mold his mentors and players behind a certain program with a set philosophy. Coach Osborne, the man who helped build the mighty Husker offense under Bob Devaney, believes in an attack that is versatile. From the I-Formation, Nebraska implements a ball-control running attack but never relinquishes the threat of the long pass. Easily, an adept quarterback can drop back and throw an assortment of short range passes from the varied Husker formation.

It is also the type of offense which attracts such fine personnel as Richard Berns and John O'Leary of past teams and such future standouts as Mike Rozier and Irving Fryar, a couple



Irving Fryar — "Jersey Flyer."

climax runners from New Jersey who could rewrite the Husker record book before they hang up their Husker togs. All these young men watched the Huskers play on national television many times and remarked that the Huskers had an exciting offense and were the kind of team they wanted to play on. TV exposure is definitely a very valuable tool.

Nebraska's offense relies on finesse and timing to succeed. It is an offense in which players of various levels of ability can succeed, if there are no mistakes. It is an offense that has won with quarterbacks who could pass but not run so well and other signal callers who could run but not pass as well. The first requirement of any Husker signal caller is the ability to think and read defenses. That is why experienced quarterbacks are so common at Nebraska and freshman and sophomore signal callers spend time on the sidelines learning. Some maintain the Husker offense is too complex, but when a team is winning year after year — it can't be all bad. Many maintain that Coach Osborne couldn't cope with anything that wasn't complicated. I personally think he is the best offensive coach in American college circles. He schools and personally tutors the quarterbacks until they can read any defense thrown against them in any game situation. The audible or check-off play is so very important and it is many times the difference between victory and defeat.

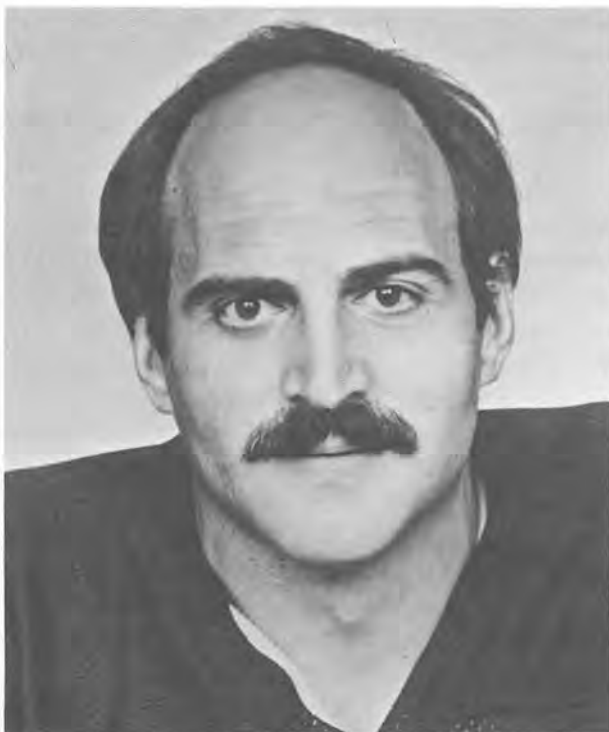
Lineman also must be experienced. A high majority of Nebraska's red-shirts are offensive lineman, who have spent an extra year developing complicated blocking techniques and perfected the timing necessary to execute them. Every single offensive play depends on perfect timing. Seemingly average offensive linemen at Nebraska have become great blockers simply by developing technique and timing. These are not natural skills in most cases. They are abilities acquired through years of practice and reflect coaching at its highest degree.

DEFENSE

Nebraska has developed two defensive theories in the Devaney and Osborne years. When Monte Kiffin was the Husker defensive coordinator, the Nebraska strategy was to control the line of scrimmage by having the best players on the field. The Blackshirts played an honest defense, meaning they seldom blitzed. Lance Van Zandt changed that when he took over the defensive reins. He gambled more on defense, trying to make

the big play and force the turnover. He believed in Attack! — Attack! — Attack! He also rotated his defensive players more, trying to keep them fresher. Gambling on defense helped neutralize any drop-off in talent by taking out starters at more vulnerable positions. Both coaches used different philosophies to succeed from the same basic five-man front defense.

In the glory days of Coach Devaney the Huskers were so loaded with great talent that I never remember Monte Johnson, who went on to be a great pro linebacker with the Oakland Raiders, ever starting a game at Nebraska. Under Coach Kiffin he was a defensive tackle.



Monte Johnson

Though Coach Osborne wants an offense and defense that can be used by players with any level of ability, he still wants the best possible player at every position on the field. He knows Nebraska stands the best chance of winning by putting its best 22 athletes on the field. One of the most important parts of building a winning Nebraska football program is in finding the right position for each player.

I have seen many great success stories about how Husker coaches have shifted players into positions where they were best suited, but the most famous one has to be in moving Outland Trophy winner Rich Glover from tackle to middle guard. The 6 foot 1 inch Glover was just an ordinary player at tackle on the Husker team. But when he moved to middle guard before his junior year, he became a superstar. It was unfortunate that when Rich went into the pro ranks, there was no position for him to play. He was too small to be a pro lineman in the 4-3 defensive formation. And for all his quickness, he was just too slow to cover the ground needed for a linebacker. But as a middle guard in our college style of play, I've only seen one player that could stay on the same field with him and that of course was Wayne Meylan, who is still rated as one of our best ever.

Jerry List was a running back on the fine 1968 frosh team with Jeff Kinney, Jeff Hughes and Van Brownson. He was a fine blocker and adequate runner. The brilliant Husker coaching staff made one of their greatest moves when they changed him to a tight end, and despite a size rather small for that position, he became one of the best Nebraska has ever had at that spot.

Bob Terrio, the linebacker who made the key interception in the 1971 Orange Bowl to defeat LSU and make Nebraska national champions, came to the Huskers from Fullerton Junior College in California as a fullback. However, for running chores, he was just about a half step slow. He developed into one of our best linebackers ever.

Dave Mason of Green Bay, Wis., was a fine offensive end who teamed up with his old battery mate, Jerry Tagge, to strike terror in the hearts of opposing teams in that area. After a couple years at Nebraska he was converted to a defensive back and was one of our best monster backs ever.

Another great move was changing Wayne Meylan from an offensive lineman to middle-guard where he garnered All-American honors in both 1966 and 1967. I personally feel he was one of the most exciting defensive lineman I ever viewed in watching the Huskers.

There are many players who could play both ways and perhaps would have been just as effective, or maybe in some cases more so, if they were playing on the other side of the line. Some that come to mind rather quickly include Maury Damkroger and Monte Anthony, both fine running backs, who

could also have been fine linebackers. You could throw Dodie Donnell and Tony Davis into that category also. Ben Gregory, who I always felt made college football almost criminal, was another that did go both ways at various times in his great career at Nebraska. I always felt he was one of the most complete football players I ever saw. And don't think for a minute that old "Jumpin John" Rodgers wouldn't have been a terror on defense. He would have roamed that secondary like Willie Mays playing center field. He was a deadly tackler.

FUTURE EXCITING, BUT WARNING FLAG IS OUT

Because Nebraska has lots of talented coaches and players, a well-thought out offense and defense and the ability to play young men in the right positions, the future of Nebraska football is every exciting. We know the Huskers can measure their miss at a national championship in terms of points, six in 1979 and eight in 1980.

However there remains a constant threat to Big Red football, more dangerous than all of the recruiting restrictions now facing our coaches. Should Tom Osborne move to a different job, how successful would the program continue to be? Could he be replaced? These are questions that may have to be answered some day. I, for one, hope this is in the far distant future. Coach Osborne is a prize coaching plum. He already has been eyed by many major colleges and nearly was hired by Colorado. He was mentioned for the Notre Dame job. What happens if the new Irish coach, who is an untested college mentor, doesn't deliver the wins the frantic Fighting Irish alumni demand and expect? With Notre Dame's recruiting network and unlimited contacts, coach Tom Osborne would be at the control of many weapons. I personally think he would be unbeatable at the South Bend school.

Would he turn his back on an offer from a so-called "glamor school" such as Southern California and the University of Texas? These are schools where the weather factor is always good in the eyes of recruits. Also those California movie moguls and Texas oil men have so much money they don't count it — they weigh it.

Or would professional football be able to tempt this offensive-minded genius? So far, no college has been able to dislodge him from the fabulous Nebraska football program, but

what about the rich pro-ranks where some win-starved owner, with a well-padded check book in his hand would make him an "offer-he-couldn't-refuse," such as the one Tampa Bay delivered to Coach John McKay of U.S.C., when they gave him a piece of the action. And sometimes it is tough to turn your back on this sort of thing. Of course there have been cases such as Coach Chuck Fairbanks who was supposed to have had such a tremendously attractive offer from New England but shucked it all to try to straighten out the turmoil-ridden football program at Colorado. My good friend Roger Ruff, who lives in Broomfield, Co., who always has an eye out for any future Husker material, told me the other day that things were so bad for Coach Fairbanks at this time that the other day he went into a restaurant with a possible recruit and he opened up a fortune cookie and found a summons in it.

I have predicted in the past year or so, that a team like the Dallas Cowboys could take a long and strong look at Osborne, if their head mentor Tom Landry should choose to move upstairs, as Osborne is definitely his kind of fair-haired boy.



Coach Osborne — "A tense moment."

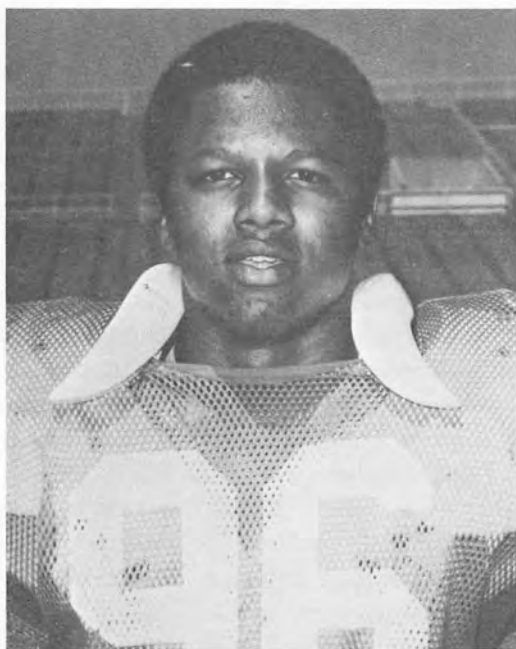
Do our Nebraska fans really realize what a fine coach we have? Most of us do I'm sure, though some can't visualize what it entails to run a program like the one Tom Osborne heads at N.U.

We are fortunate that we don't have to worry, like some schools do, about being put on probation. Coach Osborne and his staff take part in no under-the-table-dealings.

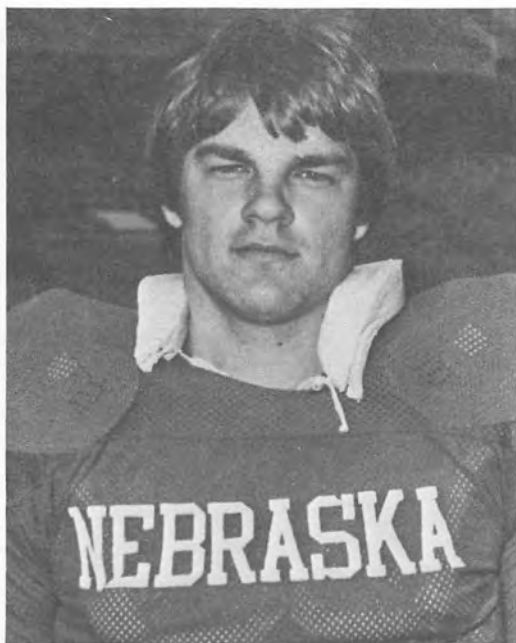
Fortunately, Tom Osborne is a native Nebraskan and a very loyal one. He has deep family ties in the state. He wouldn't consider leaving for just any job, even though the salary might be considerably more. But there are also many challenges in the coaching profession and he is one man who is up to them. I urge the Monday morning quarterbacks to bear this in mind. It's always fun to second-guess the chess moves of any coach, but keep in mind there are many human factors, such as a dropped pass, a crucial fumble or a missed block or tackle that make the difference between winning or losing. If we do have a 6-5 season some year — I certainly hope the fans understand that even the great Vince Lombardi lost a few along the way.

Has any Nebraska fan ever thought about the 1971 shoot-out with Oklahoma? On that last crucial drive, (which may have been the most exciting and important drive in Cornhusker history) Jeff Kinney scored the key touchdown. On a preceding play, he let loose of the football as he hit the ground. The Sooner fans and players screamed fumble! Had a whistle-happy, southern official ruled that a fumble and given the ball to Oklahoma, history would have been written differently. Instead of Nebraska playing Alabama in the Orange Bowl for the McArthur Bowl and the National Title, it would have been the Sooners. Sometimes the difference between victory or defeat is a pretty thin line.

All Nebraskans should simply enjoy the accomplishments of the Big Red while we still have Tom Osborne as our coach and are able to approach each season with a goal, most schools can only dream of — winning it all.



1981 Co-Captain Jimmy Williams — another walk-on



Steve Damkroger — “a steady performer”

Chapter 30

Joke Hall of Fun!

I feel that certain jokes have been around long enough. Inasmuch as I make it my business now to hear or have a tape of every speaker that I possibly can, I feel I have heard, or have in my joke index about every joke there is.

There are some jokes that should be retired and we can give them a number — and lay them to rest in the “Joke Hall of Fun,” never to be used again.

Here are some of the jokes and the fellows who I’m sure are willing to contribute them.

Jokes to be retired

Robert Allen, Hastings
“Hawaii Here We Come.”

The new president of the Nebraska Touchdown Club is Robert Allen, the redoubtable department store mogul of Hastings.

Inasmuch as the Huskers are going to be playing in Hawaii this next fall (1982) and I have been asked by a couple travel agencies to head up a group of Nebraska fans, as sort of a tour director, I can tell this favorite story of “Big Bob’s”.

Everyone knows that cannibals once inhabited the Hawaiian Islands. Years ago these two members of a native tribe were eating their dinner.

Finally one said to the other, “You know, I just hate my mother-in-law.”

The other one thought a few seconds and answered, “That’s too bad, then why don’t you just try eating the noodles?”

Tom Osborne

Tom Osborne loves to tell the story about the time he and Tony Davis, our former fullback, went out hunting with a couple of prospective recruits.

They drove into a farm yard near Beatrice and Coach Osborne, always being a fine gentleman, parked his car in the farmer's yard and walked up to the house and asked the farmer if it would be okay with him if they did a little hunting on his premises. The farmer answered, "Sure, and inasmuch as I am quite a Big Red fan myself I'll tell you where I saw some birds only yesterday when I finished picking corn on the yonder eighty. Drive up through the pasture and open the gate you'll see at the southwest corner of this pasture and you have my blessing for some good hunting."

As Tom started for the car, the farmer had an afterthought and called him back to the porch and remarked in a low voice, "Coach, would you do me a favor? I don't want my kids to hear me but we have an old pony for the kids that is just about blind, has everything wrong with him that is possible and the local vet said he should be put out of his misery. Now I can't do it myself as I am fond of this old nag, so would you just shoot him while you are out there in the pasture and when the kids go to school tomorrow I'll call the local rendering truck to take him away." Tom readily agreed. Even though this wasn't going to be the most pleasant thing in the world, he wanted to repay the farmer for his kindness.

As Tom was walking to his car he got to thinking about the various jokes that Tony Davis had pulled on him and decided this was a chance to have a little fun with him and sort of lighten the day for the two recruits who were sitting open-mouthed in the back seat.

Coach Osborne was nearly grinning to himself as he got behind the wheel and Tony quickly asked, "What was that guy talking about that was so darned confidential?" Tom seized this opportunity quickly and replied, "Oh that darned character — he made me madder than a wet hen. He told me that he felt our offense literally stunk up the place and he said that you are the worst fullback we've ever had at Nebraska. I wish he would mind his own business."

As Osborne drove through the pasture he could feel Tony doing a slow burn, and sort of squirming in his seat. Tom sort of circled the poor old nag and isolated the old horse away from

some of the farmer's prize milk cows who were grazing near by. And as he drove up in front of the horse it was clear that Davis wasn't paying much attention but was definitely trying to control his pent up emotions. Finally Tom stunned the group when he stopped the car and exclaimed, "You know I'm sick and tired of that guy's criticism — and I'm going to teach him a thing or two — and let him know he can't tell me how to run the team." As he said that, Tom pulled out his shot gun, quickly loaded it and with one shot dropped the poor old faithful nag dead as a door nail. As he started to take the shell out of the gun with his back to the car, trying desperately to hold back a smile, he heard two other shots ring out from the other side.

Osborne quickly asked, "What the heck was that?" "Tough Tony" shouted back, "Let's get out of here quick, Coach, I just picked off two cows."

"Big Dan" Hurley — Offensive Tackle

One of the finest offensive tackles in the nation, and perhaps the best, is Big Dan Hurley, the former Omaha Roncalli All-Stater, who anchors our offensive line this year.

Besides his prowess on the athletic field Dan is known for his great appetite.

One day a teammate was walking by while Dan was eating at the N.U. training table and on his plate he had two of the largest steaks to ever come out of the kitchen. The startled teammate jokingly asked, "Hey, Dan, don't tell me you're going to eat those two steaks alone?"

"No," said the likeable Hurley, with a twinkle in his eye, tucking his napkin under his chin, "With potatoes."

Coach John Melton

Coach John Melton, the N.U. coach who is rated as one of the very top recruiters in college football, is also known for his quick wit. In fact I feel he could be a stand-up comic at Vegas if he ever decides to quit his night job.

He gets loads of chuckles with this tid-bit.

When Melton was on Devaney's staff at Wyoming, his freshman quarterback, who was destined for greatness, approached him and asked for a little loan of \$1,000 to go to a movie.

The stunned Melton gasped, "Are you nuts. A thousand dollars to go to a movie?"

The cagey super star replied, "No coach, it's at a drive-in movie and I don't have a car!"

Eileen Tesmer, Secretary, Winkler Realty Co.

"Higher Authority"

I have been very lucky to have had the pleasure of working with a secretary like Eileen Tesmer, the wife of Bob Tesmer, the great Central Catholic athlete and the best third-baseman to ever come out of Grand Island Legion circles.

For 14 years she has laughed at my corny jokes and now does the same for my son, Chuck.

This is her favorite story.

Michelangelo was lying down, painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He was getting tired, so he turned over on his back, on his scaffold and relaxed a few minutes. As he turned to look down in the church he noticed a little lady praying.

The great artist, having a good sense of humor, decided to play a little joke on the lady. He leaned over the edge of the scaffold and said in a strange voice, "I am Jesus Christ! I am Jesus Christ! Listen to me and I'll perform miracles!"

The sweet little Italian lady looked up clasping her rosary and answered back: "Shut up — your — a — mouth — I'm a talkin — to — your — a momma."

Dr. Curt and Peggy Kuster

"Worth Remembering"

Dr. Curt Kuster, another great Husker booster, and his lovely wife, Peggy, love this story that I told when I had the pleasure of speaking at the banquet honoring the Nebraska National Championship Gymnastic Team.

This story concerned the popular Francis Allen, the world's greatest gymnastic coach.

This past winter after winning the national championship at the Devaney Sports Center, Coach Allen, feeling very happy after the festivities were over, was driving this cute little blond home and seemed to be speeding when one of "Lincoln's Finest" pulled him over to the curb for a possible speeding violation.

The young enterprising policeman pulled out his flashlight



Coach Francis Allen — World Class Gym Coach

and his book and walked up to Coach Allen's sports car never once suspecting who his unfortunate victim was.

As he stuck his flashlight through the window into the face of Coach Allen, he recognized him immediately and exclaimed, "Oh My God!" Coach Allen, never one to be known for being a negative thinker, didn't bat an eye and promptly replied, "That's right and don't you ever forget it."

Bob Stickney — Kearney

Bob Stickney, the Kearney floor-covering tycoon, has to be one of the most talented athletes to ever come out of my area. He does everything above average except — maybe his golf game leaves a little bit to be desired.

One day Bob was feeling a little remorse about his golfing and asked his minister, "Is it a sin to play golf on Sunday?"

The minister sadly shook his head and replied, "Stick, I've seen you play and believe me it's a sin for you to play any day."

Tammy Brown — South Dakota "Sensation"

Tammy Brown, a Grand Island teacher and a former loan magnate, asked me to come up to her home town in South Dakota to speak at their Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

They were truly beautiful people but the only mistake was in the fact I let her introduce me to the gathering.

She tore them up with this "left-handed" remark when she wryly said, "Wink's psychiatrist knew he was looking for a different automobile, so he suggested he get something that would match his personality. So Charlie bought himself a 1963 hearse."

Roger Ruff — Broomfield, Colo.
(N.U. Talent Scout Deluxe)

Roger Ruff, who is always on the look-out for some N.U. varsity talent in his area, tells this "tantalizing tidbit" which definitely should be retired.

A friend of his was one of the finest football players that Roger ever saw, during the days when one-platoon football was still around. The coaches thought he had as much potential as anyone they had ever seen.

However, the prospect could never cut the mustard on the field during a game after exceptional efforts on the practice field during the week.

Finally, when the coaches asked him why he didn't play as well in the games, he reluctantly admitted, "During the practices, and the chalk talks I completely understand the X's and the O's. But when I get in a game, I get frustrated and can't seem to remember if I'm an X or an O."

Bob Wallace — Minatare

Bob Wallace, the Big Red booster of western Nebraska and a retired automobile magnate, tells about this friend of his who was celebrating the Huskers' great victory over Oklahoma in 1978.

The poor chap celebrated until the wee-hours and after waking up with a tremendous hangover at a Lincoln Motel, got up in the middle of the night and looked in the mirror and tried to change channels.

Elmer Chop — Ravenna

They just don't make people like Elmer and Alice Chop of Ravenna anymore.

"Choppie" as he is fondly known to his friends, loves this story about the Husker fan who was celebrating the Huskers'

great victory over Florida in the 1974 Sugar Bowl Game.

After this fan had drunk a few of the Bourbon Street bars dry he was walking down this famous avenue with one foot in the gutter and the other on the curb.

One of the New Orleans policemen grabbed him and remarked, "Man, you're under arrest — you're drunk."

To this the happy-but-high fan replied, "Thank God, for a while I thought I was crippled."

Bob Boehm — Grand Island

Bob Boehm, the Grand Island real estate man, brought howls from an audience recently when he introduced me at a banquet and said, "Wink is so active that five years after he dies, his self-winding watch will still be running."

I came back with this rebuff, and everyone knew I was only jesting about Bob's political career. "I'm sort of like the great Will Roger's theory — I'm against political jokes, as too many of them are getting elected to office."

Don Kaelin — Grand Island

When Don Kaelin, Grand Island Realtor deluxe, who comes from a long line of athletes, was in college, he was captain of his baseball team which had a star hitter who absolutely would not train. The chap would go out all night and drink; the coach tried in vain to catch him in the act so he could discipline him.

One day the baseball coach asked Don, as captain of the team, to have a talk with the guy and try to straighten him out. Don sheepishly admitted to the coach that he hadn't realized the guy drank until one day he saw him sober.

Don finally tailed him until the wee hours of the morning and he caught up with him and severely admonished him by saying, "How in the world can you hit so well after carousing around all night and being drunk all the time?"

The hung-over player remarked, "When I'm batting I see three baseballs coming up to the plate and I only swing at the middle one."

Tom Strand — Columbus insurance man

"Write it Right"

Another of the best Husker boosters I know is Tom Strand, the Columbus insurance baron. His favorite story is

without a doubt Ursula Walsh's least favorite one.

Tom tells about the time he was watching a Husker scrimmage during the spring drills. He noticed the N.U. coaches had a junior college football prospect in for a visit. Walking over to this famous J.C. gridder, Tom asked the prospect for his autograph for his son.

The confused athlete replied, "I'd be glad to give you one but I don't have one with me."

Needless to say, this young man didn't qualify for the entrance exam.

Dean Olson, North Platte
"Richard — don't open that door!"

The North Platte railroader, Dean "The Dream" Olson, is one of the most loyal Big Red fans I know. Possibly one of the best running backs I've ever seen in his prep days in my home town of Ravenna; he brings fits of laughter from any group he is in when he tells this scorcher.

Dean admits he has an uncle who isn't the fastest man with a buck.

Recently the poor chap had a little heart problem and had to have a pace-maker put in to keep him going. Being so tight with his money, he bought a used one at one of the second-hand stores in western Nebraska.

Dean admits his uncle is getting along okay except every times he kisses his wife the garage door goes up.

Fred Vokoun — Pleasanton
"Frolic at Freddie's"

One of the most popular men I know, Fred Vokoun, the Pleasanton impresario who operates one of the most famous lounges and eating establishments in central Nebraska known by the difficult name of "Fred's," keeps the customers in stitches with his jokes.

One of his stories that we are retiring is the one he tells about his uncle who is 87 years old and still doesn't use glasses. He drinks right out of the bottle.

Another chuckler is about coming from a town so backward that if it wouldn't have been for mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, there wouldn't be any romance at all.

Frank Kush — (former Arizona State Coach)

“Deep Thoughts”

Coach Frank Kush told this story at the Fiesta Bowl festivities in 1975 and the crowd never recovered.

There was a deep sea diver who was down about 100 feet when the folks at the controls sent down word to him, “Come up quick — the boat is sinking.”

John and Bev Melton

“Bad Medicine”

One of my all-time favorite couples are coach John Melton and his lovely and personable wife, Bev.

This is John’s story that should be retired.

One day Coach Melton came home from practice and Bev was hustling around the house trying to get their evening meal ready though it was very apparent she had been gone all afternoon.

Finally, as John was glancing at the evening sport page, he asked her, “Honey, where were you today?”

Bev replied, “Oh, I went to see *Doctor Zhivago*.”

A concerned Melton answered, “Oh golly, sweetheart, I didn’t even know you had been sick.”

Shirley Lueth — Aurora

“Erma Bombeck — Eat your heart out.”

One of the most talented people I know has to be Shirley Lueth, and a lady, whom I always introduce as Nebraska’s answer to Erma Bombeck.

This talented author, speaker and all-around great human being loves to tell this chuckler.

She says, “My husband is such a great sports fan, that if I was to divorce him, he wouldn’t even know it if he didn’t see it on the Wide World of Sports.”

Bob Devaney — (On Rich Glover)

“Say When”

I will never forget Bob Devaney’s story on Rich Glover he told at the annual Grand Island Chamber of Commerce affair when I received my plaque for being on their Board of Directors for a three year term.

Devaney was on hand to give out these awards and he

brought down the house when he said, "I understand Rich Glover, our former All-American middle-guard, and Charlie Winkler are going to start a new kind of restaurant in Grand Island.

"It is the kind of eating establishment where people can get all they can eat for \$2.50. It is sort of a buffet type of set-up and as the people go through the line Charlie is dishing up the potatoes and meat until the dish gets about half full and then Rich Glover walks over to the customer and says, "That's all you can eat."

Dr. Al Domina, Lincoln
"Third and way — long"

The Huskers don't have a better booster than Dr. Al Domina, and he loves this story.

A few years back, Scott Poehling, the Husker blue-ribbon middle-distance runner, came out for football early in his freshman career.

Actually Scott was recruited by Coach Osborne, as a walk-on, but he gave up football after an honest effort as he figured his best future was in track.

One day Dr. Domina asked Coach Osborne if he ever thought of using Poehling as a split receiver, and Coach Tom answered with tongue in cheek, "Yes, I did — because he would have been great on those third down and half-mile situations."

Coach Moe Iba — N.U. Basketball Mentor
"Seeing Is Believing"

In one game at the Devaney Sports Center this past winter Coach Moe Iba, the new Husker head basketball coach, was getting some questionable calls from the refs. After one time-out, Moe went over to one of the resting officials and asked, "Could I borrow your rule book for a minute?" The obliging ref answered back, "Of course" and handed it to the cagey Moe.

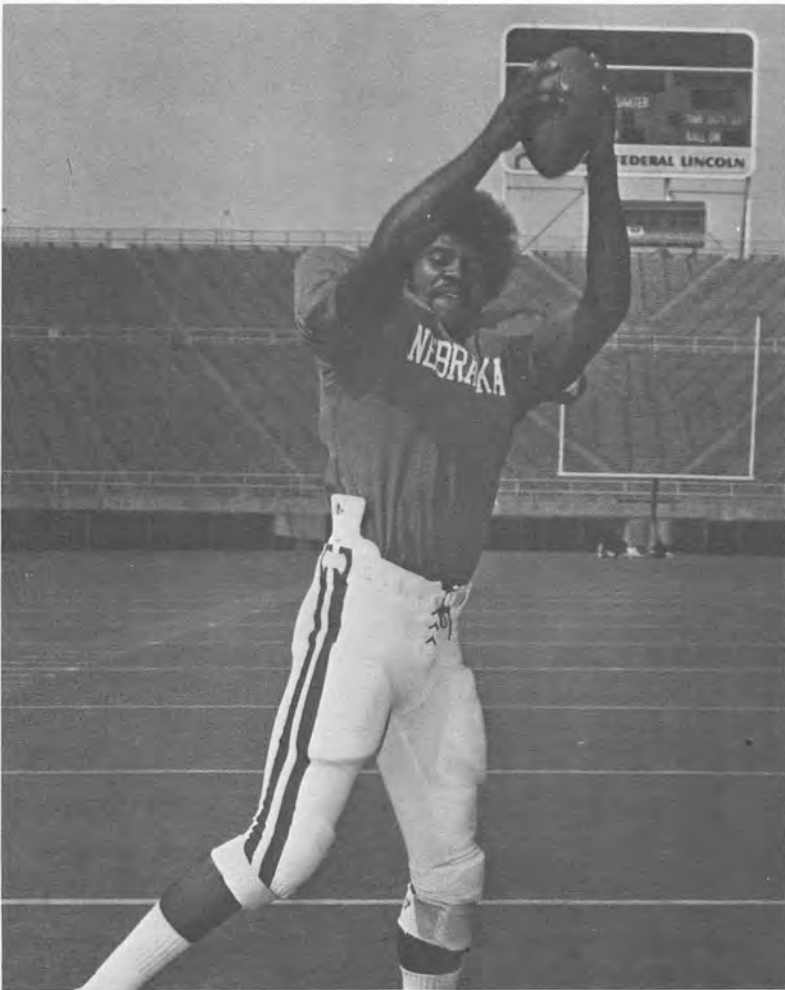
After Moe thumbed through a few pages he handed it back and smiled very sweetly and remarked, "Sorry, to have bothered you, but I was just checking to see if it was printed in Braille."

Terry Jensen — Norfolk

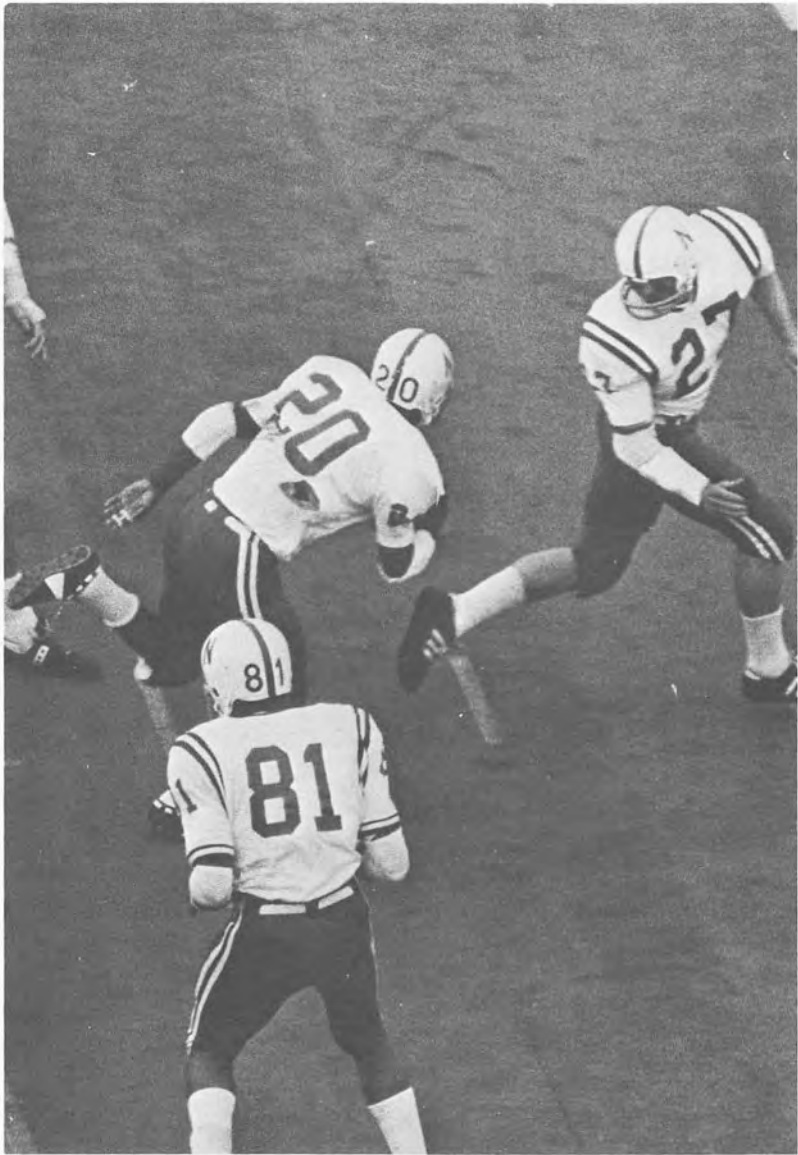
Another group that I do lots of speaking for is the various midwest banks when they have their Farmer-Businessmen Appreciation Nights.

Terry Jensen, the fine young banker of Norfolk, and one of the top young officials in the state, brought down the house with this stunner.

“Charlie Winkler recently bought a water bed for his wife on their anniversary but he is gone so much with his speaking, farm and ranch sales, and football escapades, his wife has nicknamed it the ‘Dead Sea’.”



Jamie Williams — another great tight-end



Johnny Rodger's Greatest Run — "Let's go south men."

Chapter 31

Players Who Rate as No. 10s

(Special note — I had a panel of feminine experts, including a couple of the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders, who gave of their time gladly to help mull through pictures galore to help pick the players who rate 10s. Eat your hearts out, John Travolta and Burt Reynolds)

OFFENSE

SE — Tim Smith
Tom Penney
LT — Bob Newton
LG — Dick Rupert
C — Rik Bonness
RG — Joe Adams
RT — Wally Winter
RE — Jeff Finn
QB — Vince Ferragamo
David Humm
IB — John O'Leary
Monte Anthony
WB — Curtis Craig
Rich Bahe
FB — Maury Damkroger

DEFENSE

LE — George Andrews
LT — John Dutton
MG — Jeff Pullen
RT — George Mills
RE — Tony Samuels
LB — Adrian Fiala
LB — John Ruud
Mon. — Mark LeRoy
LH — Randy Borg
Ardell Johnson
RH — Ted Harvey
Safety — Dana Stephensen
George Kyros

Old Timers — 20 years or more Special Mention

Warren Alfson — Wisner
Lawrence Ely — Grand Island
Bill Moomey — York
Rex Fischer — Oakland
Butch Luther — Cambridge

Coaches

Pete Elliott
Tom Osborne
Jack Pierce



Vince Ferragamo

MY PLEASANT SURPRISE TEAM

(These are players who I feel made the most improvement from their freshmen days on)

OFFENSE

SE — Skeeter Malito
 OT — Dan Steiner
 OG — Red Beran
 C — Kelly Saalfeld
 OG — Dwayne Carlson
 OT — Mark Doak
 TE — Jeff Finn
 QB — Steve Runty
 IB — I.M. Hipp
 WB — Don Westbrook and Tim McCrady
 FB — Phil Bates
 Punt Return man — Dave Leigl

DEFENSE

DE — Jimmy Williams
 DT — Toby Williams
 MG — Rich Glover
 DT — Ed Husmann and Bill Janssen
 DE — Derrie Nelson
 LB — Clete Pillen
 LB — Bruce Dunning
 LH — Andy Means
 RH — Bill Johnson
 Mon. — Ric Linquist
 Safety — Russel Gary
 Punter and P.A.T. — Rich Sanger (He didn't even kick for the frosh team as Starkebaum handled those chores)

MY UNDER-RATED TEAM

(These players were better football players at least in my opinion than they got credit for)

OFFENSE

SE — Skeeter Malito

OT — Mark Doak

OG — Barney Cotton

C — Tom Davis — Kelly Saalfeld

OG — Stan Waldemore

OT — Tom Orth

TE — Jeff Finn

QB — Tom Sorley

IB — Joe Orduna

WB — Anthony Steels — Ken Brown

FB — Maury Damkroger — Dan Schneiss

DEFENSE

E — John Adkins

T — Dan Pensick

MG — John Bell

T — Monte Johnson

E — Lawrence Cole

LB — Dick McCashland

LB — Bob Terrio

H — Randy Reeves — Rene Anderson

H — Larry Naviaux — Marv Mueller

Safety — Larry Valacek

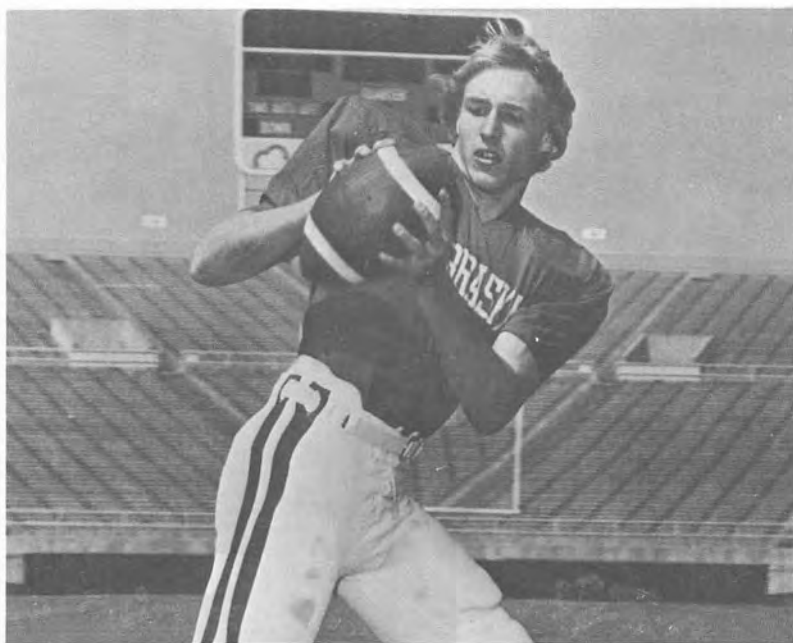
Mon — Al Larson



Ted Harvey



Larry Valasek



Todd Brown

Chapter 32

Nebraska Football Hall of Fame

One of the finest things to ever happen to Nebraska football has to be the founding of the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame.

Much of the success of this great program has been because of the efforts of H.W. "Hub" Monsky of Omaha, a former Nebraska gridder, and a man whose goal was to make this project a success. Its success can be measured by the fact that the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame Chapter is now the fourth largest in the country with more than 300 members.

This past year the club reached its ultimate goal when Bob Devaney, former Nebraska football coach and present N.U. athletic director, was voted into this prestigious organization. He will be inducted in December, 1981, at the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame banquet in New York.

There have never been two better awards given than the Nebraska Hall of Fame Awards presented in the name of Clarence E. Swanson, the late Cornhusker All-American and outstanding Lincoln business man, and the Special Merit Awards.

Swanson Award Winners:

Dr. Norman C. Carlson, Lincoln, 1972 — Probably the best posted fan I know. Rumors have it that the coaches often ask his advice. Stylish gentleman with the mannerism of a young Ronald Reagan.

Phil Gerelick, Omaha, 1973 — Former Husker basketballer. Arizona State is trying to adopt this chap as he spends the winters in that area. Admits he sometimes gave the ex-Arizona State coach, Frank Kush, a little fatherly advice, such as General Custer gave his men in the Battle of the Little Big Horn — "Remember men — don't worry about taking any prisoners!"

Otto F. Baumann, Glendora, Calif., 1974 — The pride of West Point. A man who has made the "Californians for Nebraska" famous. The "Big O", as I fondly call him, has to be about as great a fan as any college football team could have.

Herman Dinklage, Wisner, 1975 — Now deceased, he was

another great booster and was a class gentleman if there ever was one. His son, Herman, Jr., was a former Husker lineman and is now a prominent livestock feeder.

Irving Veitzer, Omaha, 1976 — Great fan who has the ability to get anything done that he attempts. If he was ever to go into politics, he would be president.

York A. Hinman, North Platte, 1977 — Every time I am in a room and this great man walks in, I want to stand up and applaud. He is a tremendous individual who has done so much for other forms of athletics besides football, such as semi-pro baseball. He is living proof that being young, handsome and wealthy shouldn't be a handicap to anyone.

Emmett J. Junge, Lincoln, 1978 — This fellow gets me enthused just being around him. He has the greatest outlook on life of anyone I know. If President Reagan ever needed a new Secretary of State, this is the man I'd recommend.

Wally Provost, Omaha, 1979 — The former Omaha World-Herald sports editor and current columnist is a walking encyclopedia on about any sport there is. Norrie Anderson of The Football News admits I am right when I say Wally is the best in his profession. Probably the only man I know with whom Howard Cosell couldn't match wits.

Lyell Bremser, Omaha, 1980 — My only regret is that this famous KFAB radio announcer wasn't on the big networks. Has made the expression, "Man, woman and child," into a household cliché. In all my banquet speaking, the question that I am asked the most often is, "Do you know Bremser?" Is particularly popular with the female fans. (Take note, Mrs. B!)

Mathias G. "Mutt" Volz, Lincoln, 1981 — An outstanding individual. If Pete Rozelle ever quit as the head prexy of the N.F.L., he would be my choice as replacement. Knows the rule book backwards and forward. If he had been on the ill-fated Titanic, he would have figured out a rule where it would have been illegal for the great ocean liner to sink.

Special Merit Awards

Lloyd Grimm, Omaha, 1975 — This wonderful man and former Nebraska end was tragically struck down in the line of duty as a federal marshal in an Indian uprising a few year ago and is confined to a wheel chair but has never lost his zest for living. If I were going on a space voyage, I would want Lloyd at the controls.

Gregg McBride, Omaha, 1975 — When I think of Nebraska high school athletics, I automatically think of this great man. One of the greatest authorities on prep sports the state ever had. I never go to Estes Park, Colo., that I don't get a lump in my throat thinking of the great visits we had with former World-Herald sports writer Gregg McBride and wife Evelyn in their Rocky Mountain retreat.

Frederick Ware, Omaha, 1975 — Another of the all-time great authorities on Nebraska athletics. This former World-Herald sports editor created some legendary stories such as the one I mentioned earlier in this book on why he dubbed Lloyd Cardwell the "Wild Hoss."

Charles W. "Cy" Sherman, Lincoln, 1975 — Still another of the talented scribes. Some call this writer from the Lincoln Star the "Dean" of them all. Gave the Huskers their official name — Cornhuskers. One of my great regrets is the fact I never got to meet this great man personally.

Jim Ross, Lincoln, 1976 — Fantastic individual. Blessed with a great sense of humor and a fellow I love to needle, because this is his specialty. Since retiring from coaching, he has moved upstairs to assistant athletic director and director of the Devaney Sports Center. In his job as director of the Sports Center he meets lots of important people and admits he has a flair for "show biz". Rumors have it that he almost quit this job a couple years ago to become Dolly Parton's personal manager.

Ralph Beechner, Lincoln, 1976 — One of the all-time great prep coaches in the Midwest. I still wonder why the University of Nebraska officials didn't contact this brilliant coach for the head job during some of the years when they were trying to get our football program back on its feet. He could field an all-time Lincoln High eleven that could hold its own in any college contest.

Maurice "Skip" Palrang, Omaha, 1976 — Another of the great legends in Nebraska prep circles. He could also field a team of ex-Boys Town greats that would strike terror into the hearts of any opposing coach. Names such as Tom Carodine, Leonard Kroll, Wilburn Hollis, Glen Hepburn, Pat Fitzgerald, Ken Geddes and others bring back fond memories to Boys Town fans.

Floyd Bottorff, Lincoln, 1977 — Here is a fellow that should write a book on *his* memoirs. He admits lots of the stories could never be told. One of the best equipment men the

Huskers ever had — well, at least until Gib Babcock, Glen Abbott and Walt Johnson. Probably one guy that doesn't have an enemy in the world.

Paul Schneider, Lincoln, 1978 — Another of the legendary figures. He says it is tough for a talented chap like him to be modest but he works at it every day. One of the great trainers in college football and a legend in his own mind. A former Lincoln High ace who admits dynamite comes in small packages. Has only one request and that is when Hollywood finally gets around to making a movie on Nebraska football, Paul wants Burt Reynolds to play his role.

Ursula Walsh, Lincoln, 1979 — One of the finest recipients of any award. Has played such a vital part in the Huskers' great success in putting so many athletes on the various All-Academic teams. The young men she works with respect her to the letter of the word.

Burton Newton, Lincoln, 1981 — Just about the finest Nebraska booster I know. Some say he takes in more Husker practices than the coaches. This beautiful human being has never met a stranger in his life. A brilliant photographer who is on the sidelines for every game. Has the best collection of pictures in the state concerning Husker athletics. I owe a great debt of thanks to him for some of the photos in this book. Husker coaches reluctantly admit they do go to Bert for advice sometimes during a game.



Burt Newton — "What do you call it, Burt?"

Chapter 33

Things I'll Remember When I'm on My Death Bed

— Ray Novak's great over-his-head kick while running away from the line of scrimmage after picking up the football following a high snap from center. The pursuing Oklahoma lineman felt about as silly as the poor Husker center that got off the bad snap.

— Dan Arrasmith, one of the finest prep cagers I've ever seen, and my partner on the Charlie Winkler Radio Show over KMMJ, wiping the tears from his eyes as he tells about their farm announcer, the flamboyant Jack McConnell, a devout Chicago Cub fan, who walked in the news room one afternoon and asked the sports announcer, "How many runs did the Cubs make today?" He told Jack — "Nineteen." The happy McConnell replied, "Good, now did they win or lose?"

— The great articles written in the dark days of Nebraska football by Norrie Anderson of the *Lincoln Star*. He tried to put a little sunshine in the Husker fan's life. The best of them all were the great articles he did on Tom Novak and Bobby Reynolds.

— The sad and startling news that Bill Holmes, the former Lincoln East star and a great young monster back who was headed for a brilliant Husker career, had died in his sleep. He was such a credit as an athlete and a young man.

— The grim news that the Huskers had missed in their recruiting of Gary Jeter of Cleveland, Walt Underwood of Atlanta and Ross Browner, another Ohio prep flash who starred at Notre Dame, while the others went on to great fame at U.S.C.

— After Nebraska recruited Curtis Craig, the Davenport, Iowa flash, I wanted to see him play so badly in the Iowa All-Star high school game that I drove to Omaha and stayed in a motel room where I could see him play on TV. The sad part of it was he sprained an ankle after the first series of downs and this phenom had to retire to the sidelines for the rest of the game.

— The thrill of being asked by Charlie Washington, our great Omaha booster, to appear on the Johnny Rodgers Roast to raise money for a boys school for some underprivileged youngsters. Even with approximately 100 speaking appearances a year, it will always go down as one of my all-time thrills.



Johnny Rodgers

— Dr. Curt Kuster's famous quote as he watched the fabulous Roger Craig running wild in an early Husker scrimmage. He remarked, "Every time I see that Roger carry that ball I feel it's like watching Mario Andretti park a car."

— My great admiration of Ray Tromba, the graduate assistant of the Husker baseball team. This young man is one of my all-time favorites and I enjoyed watching him pitch for the Huskers during his great career. I will always remember his remark when he told Coach John Sanders, "I'd never hesitate to brush back any batter who was crowding that plate. Even if it was my own mother. Come to think of it, Coach, you know Mom was one heck of a hitter."

— A terrific Husker fan, Mrs. W.L. Herbster of Holdrege, who sent me a beautiful Big Red necktie that she had made, when I was speaking at the Holdrege Jaycee Banquet a couple years ago. I have never had a gift that I appreciated more than

this lovely tie. I would recommend them to anyone for future gifts.

— The great disappointment I endured when Roger Krhounek, the Lincoln High ace running back, failed to clear the medics with his bad knees. Next to Bobby Reynolds, he was the best high school running back I've ever seen. (I didn't see Johnny "The Jet" Rodgers in high school.) What a star he would have been for the Huskers. Now a prominent Omaha architect, he was also a great baseball player.

— The disappointment of stopping in Sturgis, S.D., on my honeymoon, to try and help recruit Carroll Hardy for the Huskers in 1951. I found out he had enrolled at Colorado, after promising Coach Glassford he was coming to Nebraska. After finding out he was already in Boulder, my wife wouldn't speak to me for three days, saying that I was more interested in Nebraska football than her. I did assure her, however, that I loved her more than Nebraska basketball.

— Gary Noordam and his lovely wife, Susan, and his personal adviser, Jac Fogelstrom, counting their loot after collecting on a friendly bet with an avid Iowa U. and Iowa State fan.

This brave Iowan caught these two nervous Nebraska boosters at a weak moment and conned them into making a bet that the Hawkeyes and Cyclones would score more points in their two games against the Huskers than the N.U. crew would put on the board in their 1980 tussles, on a composite basis. The records show the Huskers making 57 against Iowa and 35 against the Cyclones while giving up nary a point to them. The tally sheet shows the combined scores to be a "meager" 92-0 in the Huskers favor. (Inasmuch as both of these great Husker fans work for the IRS, I hope they report their spoils.)

The Joke That Really Hurt

There have been memorable times following the Big Red. Some have been linked with my darkest moments such as when our 1965 team went to the Orange Bowl, and my wife and I journeyed to Miami with Chuck and Erma Seckman of Omaha, who now live in Sarasota, Florida.

Everyone remembers this game well as the powerhouses fell in the other bowl games. The Huskers could have been the No. 1 team in the nation, but were also upended by Alabama.

Just as we were preparing to leave our motel in Miami to

go to the game, the red light on my phone came on signaling an urgent message at the office. Concerned for the sake of my family, I hurried down to the motel office where I had a registered letter. Opening it with trembling hands, I found a picture of my real estate office and the building which I owned. Standing in front were Pete Kyros, George Boosalis and Lyle Fisher, a Grand Island Realtor. The building was marked "SOLD".

The first thing I thought was that the gang at the Big Boo Cafe had sold me out while I was gone and had taken the proceeds and bet it on the game. After recovering from this shock, I wasn't quite ready for the one Bear Bryant and his Crimson Tide put on my beloved Cornhuskers.

Then the next year the Alabama treatment was even worse, as I gathered my family and hightailed it out of New Orleans after an even rougher treatment from the Bear again only to come home to what I thought was going to be some sympathy from the gang at the Big Boo Cafe.

They were well aware of when I was arriving home and upon going to my office the next morning to open up at around 8 a.m., I tried not to glance over toward the fellows who I knew were at this cafe, but out of the corner of my eye I could see they were lining the windows to check out developments.

I started to unlock my door but could see it was lined in black crepe. In the middle of the door was a funeral wreath, centered with a little box. Still not daring to look at my tormentors, I opened the box to find a razor blade and a note that read, "Wink — cut your throat with this razor blade — as the body will look better in the box." As sad as it was, I had to burst out laughing and of course immediately go over to the Big Boo Cafe to hear my "former" friends laugh for what seemed like 15 minutes. The gist of one of my banquet speeches is that we've all got to stop and laugh at ourselves — and of course this was the ultimate test for me. As the old saying goes, "Laugh and the whole world laughs with you — cry and you cry alone." Bob Schnuelle, the Channel 10-11 TV executive, who was among the good-natured kidders, claimed, "I wish I would have thought to bring a camera, because the picture of poor old Wink opening that black-laced box was priceless".

They know how to hurt a guy. It was sort of like kicking a guy when he was down, but it has been a joke that has been told and retold down through the years.



Norris Anderson, center telling my co-host Dan Arrasmith and me a funny story on my radio show on KMMJ from the Midtown Holiday Inn.



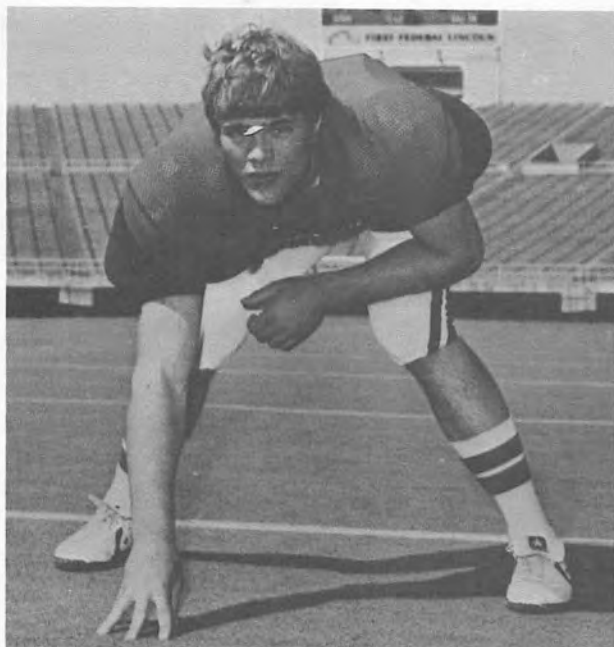
"Twinkle-toes" Roberts, Fred Metheney, Tim Smith and "Wink"



"Wink" & Athletic Bob Devaney as a guest on "Winks" weekly radio show from the Huddle Lounge.



Dedication of Memorial Stadium. Fall, 1923.



Dean Steinkuhler — Sterling, Nebr. another small town Nebraska boy makes good.



Doug Wilkening — Throw back to the Husker tradition of great fullbacks.



Dr. Norman Vincent Peale & "Wink" at a National Speakers Convention in New Orleans.



Steve Anderson of KHAS-TV (Channel 5) and Charlie Winkler on their sports show.





Charles Winkler, a Grand Island Realtor, the "Nation's No. 1 Football Fan" by Sports Illustrated, National Observer, Los Angeles Times and many other publications and has had dozens of write ups by various other newspapers and magazines over the nation.

He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Nebraska U. Football Hall of Fame and the N.U. Touchdown Club.

He is a member of the National Speakers Association and belongs to six national speakers bureaus, where he has become recognized as one of the finest humorists in the midwest. He is also very active in the sales and motivational field.

He has his own radio show on KMMJ in Grand Island during the football season where he has one of only two call in radio shows between Denver and Des Moines.

